Mr Vladimir VORONIN (President of the Republic of Moldova) [15:00:10]

Mr President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to come back to Strasbourg in a new capacity and to meet my former colleagues in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly. I am grateful to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Lord Russell-Johnston, for the opportunity to address the parliamentarians of the European democracies today.

The Republic of Moldova needs Europe, and Europe, I hope, needs the Republic of Moldova, for there are no big and small nations in Europe. Let me paraphrase the words of our classic writer, Mihai Eminescu, who said, “Europe is a diamond, and its facets, represented by European nations, give the diamond special brightness”. I fully agree with that statement.

The six years that have passed since the Republic of Moldova joined the Council of Europe have been marked by intense co-operation with this European forum. By honouring most of the commitments entered into by the Republic of Moldova upon its accession to the Council of Europe, we have achieved considerable success in the democratisation of our society. We have ratified a number of European conventions, including the European Convention on Human Rights and its additional protocols, the European Charter on Local Self-Government and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. All these have led to a fundamental change in the legislative framework, which in many respects now complies with European standards. Moldova is firmly determined to meet fully all its commitments undertaken as a member of the Council of Europe, while at the same time adjusting its legislation and government policies to European standards.

On the domestic level, implementation of the principles and norms of the Council of Europe is intended to advance the Republic of Moldova on its way towards integration in the European Union. This objective will continue to be one of the main priorities of my country’s foreign policy. In this context, I should like to express our satisfaction regarding the openness towards the Republic of Moldova shown recently by the European Union.

In particular, I express our gratitude to the EU member states for their decision to admit my country to the Stability Pact, an event that is due to take place tomorrow in Brussels, and for the invitation to participate at the European conference. We consider those decisions to be a sign of confidence in our country and a recognition of our aspirations to become in future a fully fledged member of the EU.

Mr President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, 27 August will mark ten years since the proclamation of the Republic of Moldova. During that decade, the election of political authorities, in a multi-party system, took place in Moldova. We can declare with all firmness that in the Republic of Moldova, political authorities at all levels were elected democratically. The parliamentary elections held this year were no exception: they were held democratically and correctly, as was acknowledged by numerous local and international observers. As a result of the elections, a stable parliamentary majority was created. The new leadership of the Republic of Moldova is determined to pursue the goal of the construction of a state ruled by law, based on the respect of general human values. I confirm that as head of state and as leader of the governing party.

Mr President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, democracy building in the Republic of Moldova is a major objective, but one that is difficult to achieve. The new political authorities of Moldova are confronted by three serious problems, and without settling them the building of statehood in Moldova according to European standards and values is impossible: the Transnistrian problem, poverty and corruption.
The armed conflict in Transnistria was not inter-ethnic, but political. Although several years have passed since the end of the conflict, its consequences continue to be felt. We repeatedly expressed our readiness to grant the Transnistrian region a special legal status, which would guarantee a maximum possible autonomy, conditional on preservation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova. We consider that full compliance with the decisions of the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Summit regarding the withdrawal of foreign ammunition and armed forces can bring about a long-lasting settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

In addition, the negotiation process, which is taking place with the participation of the OSCE mission and representatives of the Russian Federation and Ukraine as mediators, is moving slowly. In the Transnistrian region controlled by the separatist authorities, fundamental human rights and freedoms are violated and the population of the region is excluded from the protection system offered by the European Convention on Human Rights. That is a serious cause for concern for European democracies and for the Council of Europe as the promoter of those common human values. Without the support of Europe, it will be difficult to promote and implement European values in that region of our country.