

**ADDRESS BY LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ, SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS, AT THE
INTERPARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE OF ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL
GOVERNANCE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Vilnius

Honourable guests, fellow parliamentarians, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased and privileged to welcome you all in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. In particular, I would like to extend my congratulations to the delegation of the Sabor – the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia, which already enjoys the rights of a fully-fledged national Parliament of the European Union. Welcome to the circle of colleagues and friends!

The Interparliamentary Conference on Economic and Financial Governance is already the fifth parliamentary dimension event of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the remaining Presidency period, we will organise other four parliamentary dimension events. We have been looking forward to all of them and we have been preparing with great responsibility, therefore I feel particularly pleased to welcome you in Vilnius.

Fellow parliamentarians, ladies and gentlemen,

The economic situation differs from country to country in Europe. We are well aware of the difficulties in the countries of Southern Europe. The symptoms of economic and social crisis in these countries are more than evident: millions of people out of work; several generations of young people are at risk of long-term unemployment, which might result in difficulties for their reintegration into the labour market.

We have already seen the first signs of economic recovery in many European countries; however, there is still lack of trust in the financial markets. Liquidity established by central banks has not reached real economy and economic growth has not gathered the desired momentum.

Fortunately, Lithuania can enjoy relatively good indicators. Last year, our economy grew by 3.7 per cent. We expect the growth of a similar rate this year too. Although the unemployment figures follow a downward trend, the unemployment rate in Lithuania is still too high.

Fellow parliamentarians, ladies and gentlemen!

As you know, it is the first meeting of the Interparliamentary Conference on Economic and Financial Governance of the European Union. We have travelled a long road since the Treaty of Lisbon to make this important interparliamentary forum happen. This forum will provide real possibilities for national Parliaments to implement their rights and duties established under the Treaty of Lisbon. In other words, the forum will “contribute actively to the good functioning of the Union”.

It is not a secret that citizens of the European Union and their directly elected representatives sometimes feel a bit alienated from the decisions that are adopted in Brussels and Strasbourg. Having gathered in Vilnius, we have an excellent opportunity to fill the gap at today’s meeting of the newly established interparliamentary conference.

Long before the beginning of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, as the Presidency Parliament, has decided that despite the difficult post-crisis period, we will aim at concluding Presidency events organised in the Seimas with concrete results by adopting comprehensive conclusions. We aim at added value. I am convinced that from now on meetings of parliamentarians should end in concrete decisions. Our politicians, as well as our electorate, European citizens, must be informed about them.

Therefore, I am genuinely happy to see so many of you to have gathered in the Hall of the Act of 11 of March willing to start and ready for an open and constructive debate and search for consensus.

It is of particular relevance now, having in mind enormous changes that took place in the area of economic and financial governance of the European Union in the last five years. The

Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania has actively supported those changes; our position has always been very constructive and future-oriented.

Fellow colleagues, ladies and gentlemen!

I am convinced that the conference will provide the attending parliamentarians from entire Europe with an opportunity to successfully exchange their views and to look for the best solutions, which every country can adapt to its needs.

I also believe that the Conference will offer new opportunities for enhancing the cooperation between national Parliaments and the European Parliament, as well as other European institutions, responsible for the implementation of the economic and financial policy in the European Union.

I wish interesting presentations, productive discussions, mutual understanding and success in finding the best solutions for our countries and for all European citizens.

I wish you a pleasant stay in Vilnius!

Thank you.