

**WELCOME SPEECH BY MRS LORETA GRAUŽINIENĖ, SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS OF
THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA, AT THE MEETING OF SECRETARIES GENERAL OF
EU PARLIAMENTS**

27 January

Vilnius

Honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to have an opportunity to welcome you all to the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Less than a month has passed since the official conclusion of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. I have to admit, however, that we already miss the meetings, the talks and the many guests, who have visited Lithuania and who have admired our country's preparedness for the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the population of which amounts to half a billion.

I can confidently claim that we all, including the highest ranking Lithuanian officials and institutions that have implemented the Presidency programme and the Lithuanian people are very proud of what we succeeded in achieving in the past six months.

During the Lithuanian Presidency a total of 141 legislative and almost 300 non-legislative dossiers were concluded.

Seimas, in its turn, successfully implemented the parliamentary dimension programme within the framework of the Presidency. We organised a total of ten parliamentary dimension events with three inter-parliamentary conferences – the highest number of interparliamentary conferences ever.

The Seimas had the honour of hosting the jubilee 50th COSAC Meeting, which was attended by Mr Laurent FABIUS, one of the founding initiators of COSAC and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, who was the Speaker of the French National Assembly in 1989.

We are also proud that on 16–17 October 2013 the Seimas held an inaugural meeting of the Interparliamentary Conference on Economic and Financial Governance of the European Union. We had many distinguished guests who came not only from European Union Parliaments but also from EU institutions, as well as the International Monetary Fund and academic establishments. We hope that future Presidency Parliaments, in particular the Italian Parliament, which is to take the Presidency of the

Council of the EU next semester, will continue with the work done by the Seimas and have an ambitious approach to the future of the Interparliamentary Conference.

I would also like to mention that early last September the Seimas hosted the Interparliamentary Conference for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and the Common Security and Defence Policy, which was organised for the third time. This Conference was organised at a very complex time: the international response following the use of chemical weapons in Syria was being addressed; Lithuania and the EU Eastern Partnership countries in particular were experiencing the tremendous pressure exerted by Russia before the approaching Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius. Baroness Catherine Ashton, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission, and Mr Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO Secretary General, joined the parliamentarians from all over Europe to discuss the situation.

Honourable Secretaries General,

If I may, I will draw your attention to the fact that the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, as the Presidency Parliament, well before the start of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU, decided to aim at, even in these difficult post-crisis times, concluding every event within the Lithuanian Presidency that is hosted by the Seimas with concrete results – joint political documents and conclusions. I therefore hope that future meetings of the Presidency parliamentary dimension will also produce specific conclusions. Not only politicians but also the electorate, citizens of the European Union, have the right to know about the decisions adopted.

Honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen,

When speaking about the success of the Lithuanian Presidency, I would like to express my appreciation and to thank all of you for the support and trust you placed on us, which we felt from our colleagues from the European Union during the last semester. We are grateful for the constructive cooperation and backing.

Allow me to wish to you interesting presentations, constructive discussions and successful debate on the programme of the upcoming Conference of Speaker of European Union Parliaments. May I assure you that we have been responsibly preparing for this Conference and that we are looking forward to welcoming the Speakers of the Parliaments you represent in Vilnius in April.

I wish you a pleasant stay in Vinius!

Thank you for your attention.