

Courtesy translation

**Opening speech of László Kövér,
Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly
at the Meeting of the Secretaries General of the European Union
Parliaments**

(Budapest, House of Parliament, 10 February 2025)

Dear Secretaries General, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Guests,

Welcome to the House of Hungarian Parliament, one of the most beautiful parliamentary buildings in the world, the architectural embodiment of the Hungarian genius! I welcome all the participants of the Meeting of the Secretaries General of the European Union Parliaments. You have arrived in Hungary, a country that has existed for more than a thousand years in legal continuity, and where today not only public security, but also legal security and political stability are among the strongest in Europe.

I usually deliver political speeches in this House, but today I must make an exception for two reasons: first, because in the course of your work you hear enough of those speeches, and second, because in the course of your work you must always remain independent of any political views. This is also my most important expectation towards my colleagues in office, and they have reciprocated that by making the Office of the Hungarian National Assembly the most stable institution of the Hungarian administration through their professional and loyal service over decades and across governments. I therefore wish my fellow Speakers of European Union Parliaments the same as I have been granted: political stability in parliament and administrative stability in the working organisation of parliament.

The main purpose of today's meeting is to prepare the highest-level forum for interparliamentary cooperation, the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments. However, over the years, the meeting of heads of EU parliamentary offices has also become a useful forum providing an opportunity to review current issues of common interest and experiences of the offices and to find common solutions.

Dear Participants,

Today's meeting addresses two areas in which parliamentary offices fulfil an important role: education programmes, i.e. the transfer of knowledge about democracy, and the forms of cooperation between EU parliaments and the legislatures of candidate countries. I am sure that you will hear about valuable experiences, continuing the success of our six conferences implemented so far during our half-year long presidency, which have allowed us to welcome more than a thousand participants in Hungary.

Hungary held the presidency of the Council of the European Union for the second time in autumn 2024, during a special period. The efficient and smooth running of the presidency ensured the continuity of the EU Council's work during the transition of the EU institutions and worked for peace, security and prosperity of a truly strong Europe.

In line with the seven priorities of our presidency, we have a number of achievements to show. These include the Budapest Declaration on strengthening the competitiveness of

the European Union, but also the historic achievement of Romania and Bulgaria becoming full Schengen members as of 1 January 2025, which concludes a more than 10-year process.

During the presidency, a number of strategic policy decisions were also taken, but I will not take up your time by listing them now. However, the achievements in promoting EU enlargement deserve special mention. Hungary considers enlargement policy to be one of the EU's most strategically important policies, and the objective of our presidency was to ensure that enlargement remain an objective, credible and merit-based process. With regard to the Western Balkans, which has been promised EU membership for more than 20 years, we have managed to relaunch a process previously frozen for two and a half years, especially with Albania, Montenegro and Serbia.

The Hungarian National Assembly has supported and will continue to support the southern and eastern neighbours in the EU enlargement process through parliamentary diplomacy, both at political and official level. We have concluded bilateral cooperation agreements with many of these countries' parliaments and, at the official level, we have participated in 18 twinning and assistance programmes, the most among the EU Member States' parliaments. Many thanks for past and future cooperation with your respective offices.

Dear Secretaries General, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Finally, allow me to briefly refer to our last interparliamentary event, the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments, which will take place in this place on 11 and 12 May 2025. The conference will focus on the future of Europe: the question of European national sovereignty in world politics and the identity of European nations as a factor of competitiveness in the world economy. An invitation to the Speakers and a draft programme will be sent out later this month. I trust that during your current stay you will also have time to tour the House of Parliament, which is not only a symbol of the Hungarian state, but also a colourful picture book of Hungarian history, which will help you to understand much about our national way of thinking.

The spirit of the place demands that I draw your attention to two things in particular: the Holy Crown in the Dome Hall is for us Hungarians the organic historical and emotional embodiment of the abstract legal concept of public power, which, in a way practically unprecedented in the development of the European state and in the history of law, had its own legal personality. For a thousand years, only those who were crowned with it could legitimately rule in our country, i.e. it was not the king who held the crown, but the crown that legally embodied the nation and its constitutional continuity that had a king. This is one of the earliest European expressions of the need for community empowerment, and one of the main explanations, dear Guests, why we Hungarians do not like to be lectured on the rule of law.

The other thing I would like to bring to your attention is the fact that on 4 November 1956, within the walls of this House, István Bibó, Minister of State, typed in solitude the cry for help of the Hungarian nation to the United Nations and to world public opinion. As you know, that was when the Soviet Union attacked Hungary with more tanks than Hitler had

attacked Poland in 1939, drowning our anti-communist revolution and freedom struggle in blood, amid the indifference of official Western politics.

Since then – Dear Guests – we Hungarians do not like anyone lecturing us on solidarity or on issues of war and peace.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hoping that today's conference will be a success, I wish you a pleasant stay in Budapest. We look forward to welcoming the Speakers of your Parliaments within the walls of this House at our meeting in May, as we look forward to welcoming you in the future, on any occasion.

Thank you for your attention.