

**Keynote Speech by the President of the European Parliament Roberta
Metsola**
Conference of Speakers of the European Union Parliaments
Budapest, Hungary, 12 May 2025

Dear Speaker Kövér,
Dear President Rosenkranz,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is truly a pleasure for me to be here today in this beautiful and historic space. A palace built not for royalty, but for the people.

As a parliamentarian, it is always a joy to speak in Europe's parliaments. They represent the fact that in our Europe, every nation, every region, every person has an important role to play in our shared democracy. Our Europe is as much Budapest as it is Brussels or Strasbourg, Riga or Dublin. It is not top-down or bottom-up, but a collaborative effort among Parliamentary colleagues who are united in wanting a better future for their electorates, those who voted for them and those they represent.

This European spirit of cooperation is what makes our Union so unique. Because we know that Europe works best when it works together. The future of our shared continent does not lie exclusively in Europe or in the nation state, but in how much we can work together to improve the lives of Europeans everywhere. Not separated by invisible and needless barriers, but cooperating with vision and ambition. And in this task, we all have a role to play.

Whenever I speak to fellow parliamentarians from across our Union, the same issues are raised. People are worried about paying their bills, about affording a home, about finding a job. And whilst we all know that Europe is not 'one size fits all', we have shown again and again that by working together we can build real solutions to the problems that we all face, with full respect to the principle of subsidiarity.

We cemented our parliaments as the engines of European democracy in the Lisbon Treaty, one of the more important systemic reforms of our Union. Now, our task is to connect our efforts and fulfil our shared potential. That is down to us.

That is why these annual conferences are so crucial. As are the various forms of interparliamentary cooperation we have jointly constructed – as national parliaments and the European Parliament - to enable these discussions, from frameworks like COSAC to conferences like the European Parliamentary Week. But to shape the Europe of tomorrow, our Parliaments must go beyond simply participating in formalised structures. We must work together, side by side on a daily basis. Deepening our cooperation rather than the opposite, by exchanging best practices, sharing lessons and collaborating on shared challenges.

In an increasingly uncertain world, Europe cannot be in a position to be disunited and

uncoordinated. That is why I am glad to see parliamentary colleagues and so many familiar faces from all across Europe. And I look forward to our even closer collaboration in the coming years.

Of course, there are those detractors to this approach. Those who would seek to reverse these advances. Those who urge us to look inwards, close our doors and turn our backs on Europe and all it can offer us. We all agree that the European project is not perfect. It is, after all, a constant work in progress. But this should be more, not less, of an incentive to work together. As parliamentary representatives who are democratically elected, it is up to us to set the agenda for our shared continent and to be ambitious both for our national legislatures and for Europe. It is not a question of us versus you or you versus us.

It is for this reason that the European Parliament remains one of the strongest advocates for enlargement. It is why we were the first to call for EU candidate status for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. And it is why we continue to lead the call for European support of Ukraine in its fight for freedom.

And it is why we will support the clearest and most unequivocal conclusions today on Ukraine. Consistently with what we've collectively done in all our conclusions and meetings since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

It is also in this spirit of cooperation that the European Parliament has created last week, the European Order of Merit. This is the first European distinction of its kind. Its aim is to recognise people who have contributed significantly to our European Project. We are asking you, speakers of Europe's parliaments, to nominate our laureates. And I urge you to encourage your citizens to approach you with ideas and proposals. After all, this European Order of Merit is for them.

Because ultimately, Europe is shaped by its democracies and it is shaped by its citizens. It is, in its very basic, what we make of it. So my appeal to you is not to waste this opportunity. Let's strengthen our cooperation and work together to build what our citizens want from us, and that is a better Europe that works for everyone.

Thank you.