



OPENING SPEECHES



Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić is the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the pre-eminent Pan-European international organisation in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Prior to being elected to her current position, Ms Pejčinović Burić was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of the Republic of

Croatia, having served previously, on two occasions, as State Secretary for EU Affairs. During her time as a Deputy in the Croatian Parliament, she chaired the delegation of the Croatia-EU Joint Parliamentary Committee, headed the delegation of the Croatian Parliament to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and served on a range of foreign and European-themed committees, including in the position of Substitute Member of the Croatian Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. She holds a Bachelor of Science Degree from the Faculty of Economics at the University of Zagreb, and a Master in European Studies from the College of Europe.

Ms. Judit Varga was born in 1980 in Miskolc. She graduated summa cum laude from the Faculty of Law of the University of Miskolc in 2004. After graduating, she worked as a junior associate first at Freshfields, Bruckhaus, Deringer and then at the law firm of Hogan & Hartson in Budapest. After that, she was a trainee judge at the Pest Central District Court in Budapest until 2009, when she also took her bar exam. From 2009 she worked for the European Parliament in Brussels for nine years as a political adviser. She returned home in 2018 to continue working in Hungary as the Secretary of State for EU Relations of the Prime Minister's Office. In July 2019, she was appointed Minister of Justice. She speaks English, French, German, Spanish.





Mr Rik Daems is the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). He graduated from Brussels Solvay Business School and holds a Masters' degree in Industrial Location & Development from the Free University in Brussels. He started his career as associate expert for the UN in Central America. After serving as financial and economic advisor to the Belgian Minister of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises



(SME), he became a member of the Belgian Parliament in 1987. Initially elected to the Chamber of Representatives, since 2014 he has been a member of the Belgian Senate, where he has also chaired the Foreign Affairs Committee and the Committee on Alternate Financing of Public Investment. He first became a member of the Belgian delegation to the PACE in 2007 and was appointed Chairperson of the delegation in 2015 and group's leader in 2017. Mr Daems also served as Belgian Minister for State-owned enterprises, Public Holdings, Telecom and SME from 1999 until 2003. He was Mayor of the City of Aarschot from 1989 until 1995. In 2000, he was Chairperson of the European Council of Ministers for Telecommunication. Along with politics, his interests include contemporary art and winemaking.



Mr. Péter Sztáray is currently serving as the Minister of State for Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary. He has a distinguished record of accomplishments in the field of diplomacy and foreign policy, a career he commenced when joining the Ministry in 1993. Prior to his current position, he held the role of Permanent Representative of Hungary to NATO in Brussels from 2013 -2018, where earlier he had also served as the Deputy Permanent Representative from 2003 until 2007. Hitherto, he worked as a Political Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the capacity of Deputy Secretary

of State, and was the Head and Deputy Head of various Departments that mainly focused on non-proliferation, and relations with North America and Western Europe. Péter Sztáray has completed his studies at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna and the Faculty of Law of Eötvös Loránd University. He is married with three children.