

Press Release

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Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu from Turkey elected as new PACE President

Strasbourg, 25.01.2010 - The 318-member Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) today elected Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu (Turkey, EDG) as its new President at the opening of its plenary session in Strasbourg (25-29 January). Mr Çavuşoğlu succeeds Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) as the Assembly's 25th President. He is the first Turk to hold the office since Turkey's accession to the Council of Europe in August 1949.

“I come from a country which has prided itself for two millennia on being a bridge between continents,” Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said in his first speech as PACE President. “I want to bring that political understanding to a new level, to act as a bridge for the peoples of Europe, whether they are in the frozen Arctic or on the temperate beaches of Antalya.”

He stressed that one of the major challenges societies were facing was increasing intolerance and discrimination. “Tolerance remains an important European goal which we cannot set aside. Creating new fault lines, with the false image of the other and disrespect towards difference, must be fought with renewed urgency and vigour. We must first break down the walls in our minds. Unless we do that, there is no real freedom”, Mr Çavuşoğlu said.

“The foundation of our common European home must be built on an open society, based on respect for diversity, not on exclusion, not on discrimination, not on fear and not on hatred. We must eradicate racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism, Islamophobia and all kinds of similar phobias leading to discrimination and intolerance.”

Among his other priorities as a President of the Assembly, Mr Çavuşoğlu referred to the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, opening new avenues of co-operation, including the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

He also called on PACE to strive for the European ideal of allowing everyone to live in dignity and security and, in this regard, he reiterated the importance of the fight against terrorism.

The President also said that he considered co-operation with the new Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland as a “golden opportunity” to reflect on how to increase the relevance and effectiveness of the work of the 47-nation organisation and achieve the necessary reform.

He concluded by committing himself to championing the cause of the Parliamentary Assembly throughout the European continent.

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A politician and an economist, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu has been a Member of Parliament for Antalya since 2002. He has long-standing international experience in PACE and the European Security and Defence Assembly. He has served as PACE Vice-President and Chair of the Turkish delegation (2007-10), Chair of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population (2006-8) and second Vice-Chair of the European Democratic Group since 2009. He is a founding member of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey, and has served as the Vice-Chair of the party's Foreign Affairs Department.

Born in Alanya on 5 February 1968, he is married with one daughter.

There was only one candidate. Under the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, the President's one-year term of office may be renewed once.

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