30th Anniversary of Latvia in the Council of Europe

10 April 2025, Strasbourg (France)

Speech by Theodoros Rousopoulos
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we gather to celebrate a significant milestone in the history of Latvia and the Council of Europe.

Thirty years ago, Latvia regained its rightful place among the democratic nations of Europe, joining this Organisation and committing to the shared values. Latvia declared its independence in 1918, and throughout the 20th century, it endured tragic periods marked by annexations, deportations, and repression. Yet, the Latvian people never gave up their identity or their aspiration for freedom.

In 2023, Latvia assumed the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the second time — this time during a critical moment in Europe's history. Latvia spared no effort to support the implementation of the Reykjavík Declaration and to launch the creation of the accountability mechanism for crimes committed by the Russian Federation.

The Latvian delegation is very active in our Assembly.

We remember the exceptional dedication of Mr Boriss Cilevičs [SILEVICH], who served here for nearly 25 years.

And of Ms. Inese Lībiņa-Egnere, our former colleague in Strasbourg, whom I had the honour of meeting more recently in her role as Minister of Justice.

This anniversary is more than just a celebration of time passed; it is a testament to Latvia's unwavering dedication to the principles that define our collective European identity. Over the past three decades, Latvia's membership in the Council of Europe has led to meaningful reforms: the strengthening of protection against ill-treatment, enhanced guarantees for liberty and security, improvements in the functioning of the judiciary, and the reinforcement of the right to respect for private life.

However, our work is far from over.

The challenges we face today — from the rise of populism to the direct threat posed by Russia — require us to remain firm in our commitment to the principles of the Council of Europe. We must continue to strengthen our institutions, promote dialogue and mutual understanding, and stand united against all forces that seek to undermine our shared values.

On this special occasion, I also wish to express my deep gratitude to the Head of the Latvian Delegation to PACE, Ms Kalniņa-Lukaševica for her commitment to this Organisation.

Latvia is an example of active cooperation, European solidarity, and fidelity to common values.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the people of Latvia on this historic anniversary. Together, we have achieved much — and together, we will continue to shape a future that reflects the very best of our European values.

Thank you.