

## **Closing remarks by Mr. Marin Mrcela, President of GRECO, 20 March 2017, High-Level Launch event of GRECO's 5<sup>th</sup> Evaluation Round**

After so many eloquent and brilliant speeches, after so many good statements, it is very hard for me to add anything. I noted with great interest the Council of Europe's Deputy Secretary General reference to GRECO as being the anti-corruption benchmark, Mr. Nicoletti's reminder of the importance for States to implement GRECO's recommendations, the importance to protect whistleblowers and to deal with immunity issues, as well as to have qualified, professional staff implementing the law, among others. But I will, nonetheless, add a few points.

When preparing for these concluding remarks, I therefore thought I should share with you my wish-list as GRECO's President for this new round. So, what do I wish for the next 4 to 5 years? I actually have ten wishes....nothing comparable to the "Ten Commandments", of course. My wishes are the following...

...My first is that GRECO reports continue to be taken seriously by governments, by public and private institutions, and by the public at large. Governments will play a key role in supporting GRECO in its work and in implementing GRECO's recommendations - whatever they are. This will, in turn, strengthen the confidence the public has in their institutions and in the way public affairs are managed. Countries should pride themselves on fully implementing GRECO recommendations as a "mark of quality". This is true for countries as it is true for international institutions, including the Council of Europe. As I have recently declared, I expect the same level of integrity in the Council of Europe as we expect from our countries and we, in GRECO, will contribute to integrity initiatives in the Organisation.

...My second wish – and here I borrow the slogan of a past Council of Europe campaign – is "all different, all equal". In this room, we are all different, and that is just as well... But, we are also all equal in the monitoring process. There are no first and second class countries in GRECO, and no country is given special or preferential treatment. Our even-handedness is key to our credibility. And, by the way, equality also applies with respect to gender: I look forward to stronger gender balance in GRECO, in evaluation teams, and in our work generally.

...Third, I wish that GRECO further strengthens its relevance. This mainly depends on us. Our relevance is directly related to the seriousness and the quality of our

work. The more our work is thorough and of a high quality, the more it is likely to be relevant for countries. Relevance also depends on our ability to adjust to changing circumstances and to events, as they arise. The world around us is not always perfectly in step with the rhythm and timing of our evaluation rounds... it is our job to follow and adjust to it; and to respond rapidly when solicited.

...My fourth wish is that the involvement of GRECO evaluators will be pursued and strengthened. We need good, qualified and active evaluators as they are at the core of the mutual evaluation process. Their role and active participation in evaluations will be instrumental in ensuring the quality of our reports, and that our findings and recommendations are solid and sound. I look forward to the training session for evaluators later this year and I am glad that it has been designed to be very practical.

...My fifth wish is to continue our partnership with other peer review mechanisms, notably the UN and OECD. While our focus, our working methods, and to some extent our membership, are different, we have a lot in common and much to learn from each other and from the experience countries have with each of us. This is a work in progress which I welcome.

...Sixth, I wish for us to have an even stronger partnership with NGOs. NGOs make our societies vibrant and play a key role in the “checks and balances” that keep our democracies alive. NGO input is crucial during our evaluation visits and I would like, on occasions, to bring some of this dialogue from the field into our meeting room. I highly appreciated Mr. Ugaz positive remarks on GRECO’s work, as well as his call for greater transparency of our work and for highlighting what can we do better. We will no doubt reflect on these points. Equally, cooperation is a “two-way street”/”La cooperación debe ser mutual”. So, I look forward to an invitation by TI to share my views of TI work as well.

...My seventh wish is that the separation of powers remains a cornerstone of our democracies. As such, it is our job, when looking at the executive, the judiciary and the parliamentary branch, to make sure we never forget that this separation of powers is the foundation of any democratic State governed by the Rule of Law. To quote John Adams, “power must never be trusted without a check”.

...My eighth wish is that a decisive step is taken and, why not, our discussions with the EU are completed. GRECO’s “founding fathers” clearly envisaged EU

participation in GRECO. Since then, much – perhaps too much – has been said and written about this. I wish us to move from words to action. But I return to what I said earlier. In this room, we are all equal and we are all equally subject to, and players in, the monitoring process. Whoever has the ambition to join GRECO will have to do so on the same terms as everyone else.

...My ninth wish is that GRECO remains open and transparent. Open to building new partnerships with countries and international institutions that are interested in working with us and share our vision of a corruption-free world. Over time, I have witnessed a growing interest in GRECO's work in many quarters. I welcome this positive development which, I am sure, will intensify as the evaluation round continues. We also need more visibility: there is little point in producing such excellent reports if few people apart from ourselves are aware of them. We have nothing to hide or to be afraid of, so I count on all GRECO members to make sure our work is widely diffused. In this regard, our relationship with the media is very important and mutually supportive.

...And, finally, I cherish the pleasant and friendly atmosphere in GRECO. We discuss, we disagree, we seek consensus and, at the end of the day, we produce high quality reports and recommendations which are admired within and outside the Council of Europe. My tenth wish is that this will continue in the new round.

Now, those are my wishes.... Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to check, at the end of the evaluation round, the extent to which they have come true...

I would like to conclude by recalling the Council of Europe's Deputy Secretary General remark at the opening: GRECO is the benchmark for anti-corruption and we should strive to remain so in the new round.

Let me conclude by thanking all of you for attending this High-Level launch event and for your active participation. I trust it has been an interesting, stimulating and thought-provoking event. Today's reflections will feed directly into our new evaluation round and I thank everyone for their contribution.

I wish you *bon appétit* and remind GRECO members and observers only that our meeting will resume, *in camera* and in this room, at 14:30 today.