

Opening address
Mr. Jan Kleijssen,
Director of Information Society and Action against Crime
Conference

*“Prevention of Corruption in respect of Parliamentarians, Judges and
Prosecutors: main trends and lessons learned from GRECO’s Fourth Evaluation
Round”*

Prague, 9-10 November 2017
(Park Inn Hotel, Svobodova 1961/1)
9 November 2017, Opening plenary, 10.15 am

[Minister, Members of Parliament, Presidents, Supreme Public Prosecutor,
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,]

I am very glad to be here today to open this important Conference that takes stock of five years of GRECO’s monitoring work concerning the prevention of corruption in respect of members of parliament and the judiciary.

I am grateful to our hosts, the authorities of the Czech Republic, for making this event possible and for placing the fight against corruption so high on the programme of their Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Let me also welcome the 47th signature - by the Czech Republic - of the Additional Protocol to the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption. I look forward to the Czech Republic joining the other 44 states which have already ratified it as soon as possible.

I am very happy to see many representatives of member states, as well as representatives of civil society organisations and our partner international organisations represented here today. Your contributions will be instrumental to the success of this event.

Since transparency is key to accountability, we at the Council of Europe must lead by example. Let me therefore give a very warm welcome to all those who are following us on live stream, wherever they are, who will be

able to interact with those of us who are physically present here today by asking questions or voting for their favourite ones.

With the adoption of nearly 100 evaluation and compliance reports since the beginning of the 4th Evaluation Round in 2012, GRECO has played a pivotal role in supporting legal and institutional changes in many countries. We have the ability and the tools to be better and smarter at preventing and countering corruption.

The Horizontal Study on the main trends and conclusions of GRECO's 4th Evaluation Round which will be presented today is a true "Guide to anti-corruption reforms". It is an extraordinary compilation of the areas where GRECO has identified the main shortcomings, and summarizes its principal recommendations for reforms.

The ball is now in member states' courts to make these reforms happen. This is a task not only for governments, but also for the three categories under review: members of parliament, judges and prosecutors. They need to take ownership and responsibility for translating these recommendations for reforms into real change in their own constituencies.

Yet, in spite of all this good work, there are reasons for us to be concerned. On the one hand, countries are being slower than expected in implementing GRECO's 4th round recommendations. On the other, we are seeing instances in which previously adopted reforms are being reversed and others in which those who speak up against corruption are being silenced. Finally, it is not uncommon for "grand corruption" to take place at the policy formulation end of politics, thereby distorting the proper functioning of the state and enabling those in power to benefit at the expense of the public good.

We must remain vigilant. I know that GRECO's Secretariat is watching these developments very closely and will not hesitate to bring to GRECO's attention instances where they think progress is being "undone", for GRECO to take any necessary action under its new *ad hoc* procedure. We also need to ask ourselves whether there is any need to revitalize our legal arsenal of international anti-corruption standards to capture instances of

“grand-corruption” which may be escaping the current international legal frameworks.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A Czech proverb says that “You will get furthest with honesty”. I can't agree more. Short-term political gain must give way to genuine reforms and effective measures to prevent corruption. What recent history teaches us is that a lack of integrity and corruption lead to cynicism, populism, radicalisation and extremism. In the medium to long term, corruption brings down countries' financial and economic systems, our democratic set ups, respect for Human Rights, and the Rule of Law. In short, sooner or later, without determined political leadership against corruption, this “cancer of society” will make “losers” of us all.

As Vaclav Havel said, “living in truth” starts by being honest with oneself. In this regard, let me praise GRECO's ground-breaking work in evaluating the integrity frameworks of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations. I trust that our own Organisation will lead by example and that these Council of Europe bodies will fully implement GRECO's recommendations without delay. Not only is GRECO watching, most importantly, the citizens of our continent are watching.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Countries are not alone in their anti-corruption efforts. As we will hear later this morning, the Council of Europe has designed and implemented a number of technical assistance, cooperation projects across many countries in Europe and North Africa. These projects rely on and contribute to the implementation of GRECO's findings and recommendations. In addition, GRECO's Secretariat increasingly performs an “after-sales service” to provide interested countries with information about what is expected from them when implementing GRECO's recommendations. This combined effort is an essential part of our comprehensive approach to anti-corruption, consisting of standard-setting, monitoring and technical cooperation.

As we take stock of the lessons learned from the 4th Evaluation Round, a new 5th Evaluation Round has started. It covers the other two essential components of the functioning of any state: central government, including the top executive functions, and law enforcement.

This new round, like the 4th one, is about leading by example. It is about making sure that those who are entrusted with the task of running our democracies and those who are expected to ensure respect for the Rule of Law, do so with honesty, ethics and transparency. There is nothing that can do more harm to our democracies than members of government or of police forces whose moral standing is affected by corruption, dishonesty, or murky dealings. We expect, and have the right to expect, the highest possible standard of behaviour from them.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me conclude.

This Conference brings together continuity and novelty. It brings continuity thanks to the many of you who have played a key role throughout this 4th Evaluation Round: you will allow us to link the various pieces of the puzzle and build on GRECO's jurisprudence. It brings novelty, as many new colleagues present here today will be able to contribute their valuable experience and knowledge to inspire countries in implementing GRECO's 4th round recommendations and to use the new 5th round as an opportunity to better our work even further.

I wish us all a successful Conference and look forward to the outcome of our deliberations.

Thank you very much for your attention.