

**30th anniversary of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe – Strasbourg, France, 10 December 2019**

## Speech by Anders KNAPE (Sweden, EPP/CCE), President of the Congress

*Check against delivery - Seul le prononcé fait foi*

**Strasbourg, France, 10 December 2019**

Mr Chairman,  
Secretary General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you today on behalf of the local and regional dimension of the quadrilogue of the North-South Centre.

I regret that I am not able to be among you in person, for this event that brings us together to celebrate 30 years of the North-South Centre, but I have asked the Congress Secretariat to convey my message to you.

Speaking for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, I would like, first and foremost, to congratulate the Centre on its achievements. Over 30 years of its existence, the Centre has become an indispensable platform of dialogue for the members of the quadrilogue on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea.

Let me also congratulate the Presidency of the Centre: the Chair in the person of Ambassador Montobbio, and the Vice-Chair, Mr Afkir, Consul General of Morocco, as well as the team in Lisbon, for the remarkable work that they are doing to implement its activities and promote the Council of Europe's values.

Anniversaries are always a very timely moment to take stock of the achievements and look to upcoming developments and challenges to overcome.

30 years ago, the world was going through historical events that have changed the face of Europe: the Berlin Wall fell down heralding the end of division on our continent and indeed in the entire world, and opening the door to a new era. This has presented opportunities to promote common values across to the South and to raise awareness of interdependence of our world regardless of whether we live in its northern or southern part.

This is the very *raison d'être* of this Centre: bringing the message beyond European borders, connecting people and representing the voice of non member states in the Council of Europe.

Let us take a moment to praise the efforts and the vision of those who, back then, established this Centre in the format we know today: a quadrilogue, bringing together representatives of the four pillars, both from the North and the South of the Mediterranean. As a representative of the local and regional part of this quadrilogue, I welcome and value the opportunities provided by the Centre for us to enter into direct dialogue with governments, parliaments and civil society across the Mediterranean Sea.

Today, our societies are again faced with serious challenges and threats to our very values and our way of living together – living together within and beyond European borders in one world in which it is increasingly difficult to tell where the South ends and the North begins. In a world which is increasingly inter-connected and interdependent, where solidarity between people and countries is needed more than ever before.

This is why the role of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity remains crucial today for bringing all actors together and joining their forces in a concerted and consistent action.

I would also like to praise the flagship events of the Centre: the North-South Prize and the Lisbon Forum which allow to highlight exceptional and inspiring people committed to the promotion of solidarity and peace, and to bring forth key issues that matter the most to our societies.

Today, the North-South Centre is also well placed to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals within the quadrilogue partners on both shores of the Mediterranean – and the Lisbon Forum held two weeks ago, was a great example in this respect.

Of course, the Centre should also continue dedicating its efforts to its core missions: promoting global education, raising awareness of young people and supporting their training, and further empowering women.

As Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

This is why the work you do is so important.

I would like to thank you for this work and for your commitment, and to reiterate the full support of the Congress.

Happy birthday!