58th Joint Meeting
of the
Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)

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

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Dear excellencies, dear Secretary General of the Council of Europe, ladies and gentlemen, On behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly, may I greet you all and thank the Montenegrin authorities for hosting this meeting.

I would also like to thank the Council of Europe Development Bank, especially the Chair of the Governing Board Ambassador Harry Rusz, the Chair of the Administrative Council, Ms Wioletta Barwicka-Lofthouse and the Governor Mr Carlo Monticelli, for having invited me to attend today's event –

I think it is the first time that a President of the Parliamentary Assembly addresses the Joint Meeting of the Bank and I would like to sincerely thank you for this honour to invite me and the Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly, Ms Chatzivassiliou.

I will briefly share some thoughts – from a parliamentary perspective – on the important work you are doing together with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB). I will do so in the light of a recent debate that the Parliamentary Assembly held last October on the role of the Bank in implementing the Reykjavik Declaration.

The Bank will turn 70 next year,- celebrating countless achievements of its contribution to building stronger and more inclusive, more human-centred Europe. By helping its member countries grow stronger, the Bank has consolidated its mission and capacity of investing in people, resilient living

environments and quality public infrastructure and services for socio-economic inclusion.

Beyond words, the Bank contributes its fair share of funding for the social sectors such as health, education and vocational training, social housing, judicial infrastructure, prevention and relief in handling natural disasters, microfinance.

But, - while funding is important, human expertise and support for the design and implementation of projects is even more crucial to maximise benefits for the population, especially when the aim is to serve the more vulnerable persons.

I therefore wish to pay tribute to the efforts that the staff of the CEB deploys in supporting the preparation of projects, financial due diligence and step-by-step realisation of project activities by accompanying national authorities and coordinating with institutional partners. By co-financing projects, by involving beneficiaries and streamlining priorities, the Bank responds to the needs on the ground in a more targeted and comprehensive way.

We appreciate that during the Reykjavik Summit in 2023, member States acknowledged the added value the CEB can provide to support the reconstruction of Ukraine while also encouraging the Bank to focus on the social dimensions of climate change and environmental degradation.

These expectations align with the orientations laid out in the Bank's Strategic Framework for 2023-2027. Responding to social development needs and inclusion challenges in member States is a key focus of the Bank's work, aligned with its core mission.

Disruptive events like the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and natural disasters forced many governments to reallocate spending, amplifying existing social vulnerabilities.

In this context, the CEB's emphasis on education is timely. It helps us rethink long-term national strategies and rebalance priorities.

As a professor myself, I know first hand the consequences of the lack of funding in education.

Despite geopolitical challenges, a new generation of Europeans is emerging, and we must equip them with the knowledge and skills to thrive and contribute to society. Quality public services and inclusive education are essential for a better future.

Together, we must continue to support the UN 2030 Agenda and reduce social exclusion. With the CEB's support, building a resilient and inclusive society becomes more achievable.

The Parliamentary Assembly, through its resolution and recommendation, encouraged the Bank to support projects improving access to quality public services and to consider relevant Council of Europe recommendations. Parliaments will keep supporting the CEB, and I encourage continued cooperation with parliamentarians to build strong synergies at national and European levels.

Dear participants,

Many years ago as a journalist I had the honour to interview one of the most important political leaders of our time, Mr Nelson Mandela. I will quote him: "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world".

Thank you.