

Greetings to the EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly, Yerevan 17 March

Emin Yeritsyan – Co-chair of CORLEAP

Draft (check against the delivery)

Dear members of parliaments, excellences,

It is a pleasure to address you today on behalf of the annual Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities of the Eastern Partnership, CORLEAP for short.

Unfortunately Mr Markkula, the President of the CoR and my co-chair in CORLEAP, cannot be here with us today. I am glad to convey his best regards to your assembly.

As you might know, CORLEAP was established by the Committee of the Regions in 2011 to bring a regional and local dimension into the EU's Eastern Partnership. Its work has been successful and is closely followed by the European Commission, the European External Action Service as well as by other stakeholders in the policy.

And rightly so: as a matter of fact CORLEAP is the only vehicle within the EU institutional structure that gives the opportunity to discuss the contribution of cities and regions in the development of the Eastern Partnership policy.

The work of CORLEAP was highly appreciated by the latest EaP Summit of the Heads of State in Vilnius. Let me quote the Summit conclusions:

*The participants of the Summit highlight the significant role of local democracy and citizen participation in pursuing the goals of the Eastern Partnership.*

*The participants support the inclusion of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the relevant Eastern Partnership policies and strategies and encourage the representatives of national associations of local and regional authorities and CORLEAP to enhance their contribution to the Eastern Partnership.*

Excellences,

We have worked very closely with all our members and partners in changing the EaP partnership from an inter-governmental policy to the policy that involves all stakeholders.

As an example of our numerous activities, let me remind the seminar in October 2014 in Brussels. The seminar was devoted to Eastern Partnership territorial and parliamentary cooperation and I was pleased to discuss those issues with Ms Hautala and Mr Dolidze, who represented EURONEST.

According to the CORLEAP Action Plan for 2014-2015 that will lead us to the EaP Summit in Riga our activities are focused on

- administrative capacity building and exchange of best practice at the sub-national level,
- decentralisation and local self-government
- and a promotion of territorial and cross-border cooperation.

I have to mention in this context the important role in CORLEAP development brought from the early beginning by our permanent observers

- the Congress of the Council of Europe;

- the Civil Society Forum;

and your assembly – the EURONEST.

Excellences,

We are closely following the events in Ukraine and support the developments with a strong focus on decentralisation and constitutional reform. CORLEAP aims to promote the principles of local democracy and devolution, both at the EaP and at the EU level.

CORLEAP will continue to act as a communication channel between local and regional authorities in EU and the Eastern Partnership countries, with the aim of engaging more local and regional authorities and their associations in the EaP policy.

In this context CORLEAP wishes to establish even closer ties with EURONEST Parliamentary assembly and to be involved in your work where you find it appropriate.

Thank you for your attention.