

**Address by Mr. Alexandru PERES,**  
**Vice-President of the Senate of Romania**

**Mister Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Senates,  
Senators,  
Secretaries General,  
Distinguished members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great pleasure for me to be here with you, in such a distinguished audience and beautiful venue, The Hague, the symbol of the old royal tradition of Netherlands and, at the same time, the city who is hosting the International Court of Justice, the highest guarantor of treaties and customary international law's observance.

The fall of the Berlin Wall, 20 years ago was equivalent to a new beginning for those countries which were isolated from Western Europe, behind the Iron Curtain, and meant a gradual re-integration into a Europe of democratic values. The Romanian constitutional traditions dating back from the second half of the XIXth Century and that of the period between the two World Wars, were once renewed with the adoption in 1991 of a democratic constitutional framework, and then amended in 2003, when the realities changed, with a view to attaining the Euro-Atlantic objectives.

In their capacity of Upper Chambers, the European Senates are to be involved, as well as other institutional stakeholders, in identifying answers to the global challenges, such as terrorism, climate change, and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and, recently to the economic-financial crisis.

In this context, the Senates' responsibility, as vectors of institutional and social stability, is becoming essential. Although different, the European Senates share the same *raison d'être*: maintaining and enhancing democracy, through a responsible exercise, in transparent conditions of the legislative and oversight powers, the development of a dialogue between citizens and civil society, the promotion of some policies based upon the observance of sustainable development, good governance, human rights and fundamental freedoms principles.

The steady concern regarding the consolidation of the senators' relationship with citizens, especially with young men and civil society, was recently transposed in a reform program of the activity of our institution. This initiative pursues the

achievement of three key objectives: the continuous effectiveness of the legislative process, the increasing transparency of the entire activity of the Senate; the conclusion of partnerships, at national and local level with state bodies and with NGOs. These partnerships will allow, on the one hand, concerted actions of democratic values promotion and, on the other hand, an easier access of the citizens to the information concerning the activity of the Senate of Romania.

The Senate's openness was once again ascertained by the adoption last year of the Law on uninominal voting system for the parliamentary elections. The reform of the electoral system had as main goals a higher degree of representativeness within the legislative body, and closer ties between citizens and their representative within Parliament.

On the eve of the Lisbon Treaty adoption - it is worth mentioning that Romania was one of the first countries who ratified the Lisbon Treaty, the ratification procedure being completed by the Romanian Parliament on 4 February 2008 -, it is possible that changes in the functioning of the Romanian parliamentary system are to be considered.

For example, in the Romanian Parliament, there is a single Committee for European Affairs, acting as a joint standing committee of both Chambers. This committee is entitled to take part in the debates on the future of the European construction and to express the Romanian Parliament's point of view on European affairs, thus contributing to the achievement of the national position, which will be taken into consideration in the making-decision process by the European Union Council.

In the near future, we are envisaging taking over the model applicable in 9 out of 12 of bicameral parliaments of EU Member States, respectively two separate committees, one belonging to the Senate, and other one to the Chamber of Deputies. We strongly believe that a such choice would allow a more substantial parliamentary involvement in the European Affairs field, it would facilitate the cooperation with other standing committees and it would strengthen the role incumbent upon the Senate in underpinning the Romanian interests at the European level, in the context of the significant increase of the place given to the national parliaments, in accordance with the Lisbon Treaty provisions.

The achievement of a United Europe must rely on an open co-operation, with a view to coordinating policies at the European level, and it cannot be fulfilled only by means of powerful, responsible, and legitimate bodies for all the European citizens.

*Dear Colleagues,*

Although the Government is not at the same level of legitimacy as the Parliament, as a result of the vote of confidence given by a consistent parliamentary majority, the Executive becomes in fact, as the French constitutional law Professor Pierre Pactet underlined, the propelling force and the dynamic element of the political system as a whole. The obvious predisposition of the Executive to replace Parliament is illustrated by statistics, which show that 90% of the legislative initiatives are originating from government, the right of the legislative bodies to pass laws being transformed in a rather formal competence. The legal institution of the legislative delegation, through the empowerment of Government to edict acts having legal value, often goes beyond the constitutional limits by the issue of legal acts, which should be the sole competence of the legislative power. There are issues upon which we should reflect – even in the framework of our Association - , and if we want that the Parliament will continue to represent a milestone of a fully democratic institutional architecture.

Thank you for your kind attention!