

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honoured to be able to congratulate you, Mr. President, and all the Members of the General Committee, on behalf of the Delegation of the Republic of Slovenia, participating in this Congress, for your election to the highly-responsible position of chairing the Congress. I am fully convinced that your election is a strong guarantee for the successful and creative work of the Congress.

My Delegation represents a small European country, a southern neighbour of Austria, and sharing the burden of international organised crime with other, larger countries, whose distinguished representatives are present in this Conference Hall.

As an Associated Member of the European Union, we are deeply aware of the danger posed by any of the forms of the organised transnational crime to all of us. However, we are also aware of our responsibility to participate in the effective fight against this evil, devoting to this end our best efforts and possibilities.

Our home figures indicate an increase in the organised crime taking on new forms. Criminal activities involving trafficking in human beings, money laundering and corruption are increasing most rapidly, while other forms of crime such as violence of all kind, particularly the violence directed against women and children, together with illegal drug-trafficking, have become a constant part of our criminal scene during the last few years.

These facts called for the strengthening of measures undertaken for the detection and prevention of such acts, which have resulted in greater powers conferred upon the authorities responsible for detection (the police) and prosecution (state prosecutor's offices) of crime. In addition, the policy of penalties imposed for the commitment of such acts has become considerably stricter. Relatively mild sentences for illegal drug-trafficking in the past caused that international criminal associations skilfully took advantage of such circumstances. The results of now increased penalties have not failed to come and during the recent time, quite a few important international trafficking routes crossing our country have been destroyed.

International criminal activities do not stop either at regional, state or even continental frontiers, which raises the question of where and how a small country like mine can and should play its respective role in this process. The advantage of a small country lies in the fact that it is better able to control the movement of crime, given its smaller territory and a smaller population, making the control more successful provided the authorities in charge of detection and prosecution are well-organised. This is supported by the fact that the rate of approximately 60% of successfully investigated criminal acts is among the higher ones in Europe. On the other hand, however, a smaller country is necessarily bound to a well co-ordinated operation of crime-detecting and prosecuting authorities in other countries. In this context, a swift and effective cooperation with the relevant authorities of the neighbouring countries is of the paramount importance. In the case of Slovenia, these countries are Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. It should be stressed that good cooperation in this field is established with all our neighbours.

This, however, should not lead us to the conclusion that the present situation is the optimal one and that nothing needs to be done in view of improvement in any of the fields relating to the fight against the organised crime. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia is deeply

aware of this great responsibility, therefore investing, within the given possibilities, the assets required for both technical improvement of the equipment and training of the people engaged in the crime-related fields. This is our constant guideline in the fight against the international organised crime, therefore the Republic of Slovenia, wholly joins the declaration of the Presidency of the European Union as presented to us yesterday by Portugal, the country now presiding the European Union.

Thank you for your attention