Mr Zsolt NÉMETH (Hungary, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group): Thank you, Madame President.

Dear colleagues, in the name of the European People's Party I would like to welcome our new Secretary General Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ among us. Congratulations on your election. We find it a very interesting and telling coincidence that we are celebrating our 70th anniversary and the beginning of your mandate. We would like to congratulate you because we feel it is very important that the European People's Party renewed Christian democracy has a louder voice in this Assembly. The EPP is proud of you. I believe that your tandem with the President of the Assembly, coming from another political family, will enable you to perform a unique and successful tandem.

We are also glad that we have got a lady in this position again, as it was said by Ms Nicole TRISSE. I agree with her that you sit in the chair of Catherine Lalumière. We all remember Catherine Lalumière because she was the person who played a very important role in bringing Eastern and Central European countries into the Parliamentary Assembly and into the Council of Europe in general. And we currently feel a momentum in Europe when enlargement may again restart. Western Balkan countries are turning their eyes towards Brussels and Strasbourg, and our eastern partners are also trying to get on the train of European integration again. There are positive signs, as it has been said just before, that it might be a realistic hope. There is momentum. I believe we need to grab this opportunity, and Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ will be a kind of Catherine Lalumière of our times.

Finally, we are also glad that you come from Eastern and Central Europe. We are experiencing a big divide between the Eastern and the Western parts of Europe. We have different histories and different memories. To bridge over these differences is vitally important for the future of Europe, the Council of Europe and the European Union. We wish you a successful service. Thank you very much for your attention.