Enver CAN (for Ilham TOHTI): Dear Madam President. Dear Members of Parliament and distinguished guests.

I am very much honoured to be here among you today to represent my fellow countryman, Professor Ilham Tohti. A brave and courageous hero of the Uyghurs. The Uyghurs are an ethnic group with significant contributions to Central Asian and world civilization, and have been struggling to lead normal lives for many decades.

I express this sincere thanks of Ilham Tohti, his family and also the gratitude of the Uyghur people as a whole to you, Madam President, Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Václav Havel Library and the Charter 77 Foundation for choosing him for the prestigious Václav Havel Human Rights Prize.

Indeed, Ms President, Ilham Tohti's selection for the prize echoes your recent statement in which you say, I quote: "the women and men who defend our human rights are the very best of us. Their courage and determination in standing up for the basic principles of justice and fairness, often at great personal cost, risking their liberty and sometimes even their lives, deserve our profound respect and gratitude. They are on the front line of human rights." And of course this statement, Madam President, rings particularly through when referring to Ilham Tohti. To emphasize your declaration further, Madam President, and to affirm that Ilham Tohti is a worthy recipient of this award, let me convey that prior to his imprisonment Ilham Tohti told The Voice of America "even if I should die at the hands of the domestic security or state security police, don't think that I have been killed by Hun people and don't let hatred come between our two peoples."

Then, even after being sentenced to life in prison in September 2014, he issued a statement through his lawyer saying that peace is the heavenly gift to the Uyghur and Hun people. Only peace and goodwill can create common interest. Ilham Tohti’s selflessness, spirit and full belief in the good of humanity will prevail, as this along with hope, is something the Chinese Communist Party cannot take. Not from Ilham Tohti, and not from all the unjustly imprisoned Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz and their families.

The Václav Havel Prize is a significant recognition by the western democratic community of Ilham Tohti's work for human rights and the freedom of his people. It will, with no doubt, contribute to his survival behind bars and give the Uyghur people another impulse to continue resisting against oppression. Today, the prize is distinguishing one person, but by doing so it is recognizing a whole population and giving the downtrodden a voice. For it is the entire people of Uyghurs that look to you for help.

In this report:
1. Speeches in English, French, German and Italian are reported in full in English.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised from the interpretation and indicated by *.
3. Speeches in German and Italian are available in full on the Assembly’s website.
4. The text of the amendments is available at the document centre and on the Assembly’s website. Only oral amendments or oral sub-amendments are reproduced in the report of debates.
5. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1081 not later than 24 hours after the report has been published.
The Václav Havel Human Rights Prize is hereby sending a strong signal to the communist rulers in Beijing, who question western values, indicating that the free democratic world will not tolerate the continued violation of basic human rights.

I stand before you as one man, but with millions of Uyghurs behind me, who all thank you for your consideration and attention towards our fight. This is a milestone in our continued fight to free Ilham Tohti and we will continue our fight until he and every last unjustly imprisoned person is freed.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart. Thank you very much.