**Opening address by**

**Peter Kasalovský, Permanent Representative of the Association and co-initiator of the International Peace Committee,**

**at the extraordinary meeting and the overall 251th event**

**of the Association, 19 February 2016**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Your Excellency OECD Secretary-General, Mr José Ángel Gurría and Mme Gurría,**

**Your Excellency former president of the Slovak Republic, Mr Rudolf Schuster,**

**Your Excellency Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of Slovakia, Mr Peter Kažimír,**

**Excellences, Ambassadors of the Croatia, Indonesia, Cuba, the Russian Federation, and Deputy Ambassador of Mexico,**

**Distinguished President of the World Chambers Federation, Mr Peter Mihók,**

**Distinguished Members of the International Peace Committee,**

**Dear Guests, present and former members of the Association,**

The year 2016 is the twenty-fourth year in the life of our Association; 19 August 2016 will mark the beginning of its twenty-fifth year. It will be the anniversary of the day on which I convened a meeting of economic and social leaders with the idea to create, in a new autonomous republic, a qualitatively new platform for new thinking, independent on political parties.

Today we are holding our first extraordinary meeting of 2016, adorned by truly remarkable guests. From 1993 on, our Association hosted presidents and prime ministers, government ministers, world-renowned economic, scientific and cultural leaders, and unique representatives of new thinking. Among them were leading personalities from abroad and from Slovakia and the Czech Republic. We consider it highly symbolic that we can greet today among us the Secretary-General of the OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Mr José Ángel Gurría.

Eighteen years ago we had the privilege to speak with his predecessor Mr Donald Johnston by means of a tele bridge between Paris and Bratislava. Already then we were fully aware of the fact that history repeats itself; unfortunately, it does so at an ever higher cost. At the cost of more suffering, more misery and more lives. Although the Slovak Republic was not yet a member of the OECD at the time, the highest representative of that organisation confirmed for our forum that Slovakia was not, so to speak, a second category country, and that we stood a reasonable chance to join the group of the most developed countries. This happened two years later.

The history of the OECD is as young as are the oldest members of our Association. It began in 1948, and since 1960 the OECD has evolved to the current and qualitatively higher level. I would like to emphasise that at this momentous point in time the Organisation has not only the opportunity but also the capability to put an end to the progressive destabilisation of the relations between the nations and the states, and to the civilisation crisis in general, through cooperation between its 34 member states and another seventy cooperating countries.

We were and continue to be convinced that the OECD is an appropriate platform for the fulfilment of the vital role of the today’s generations. Sadly, quite a few of our contemporaries – the leaders of various countries – fail to perceive the seriousness of the situation and of its crisis character, and single-mindedly pursue their own interests, degrading their partners to the position of mere onlookers. It seems that what determines international relations today is again the military and economic power.

In a way, from the history point of view, we were lucky to have peacefully lived through the breakdown – the final stage of disintegration of the Soviet model of organisation of society – and to have joined the CSCE, the lighthouse of hope for global development. The course of history ultimately led us to take part in the Schuman-Mitterand-Kohl revival of the economically and socially most highly developed part of the world with a strong civilisation background. Thus, until the last year, we lived without the fear of military confrontation.

Opening our extraordinary meeting I must note and stress that, in comparison with the same time last year, the world has indeed changed, but not for the better. This situation has been brought about, among other things, by the absence of human and political responsibility, unpreparedness or even inability to “see around the corners” and to perceive the real risks, on the part of global political leaders. They contributed to the emergence of great threats for the world, for Europe and for the European Union.

Ever since 2006 we have witnessed an expansion of reprehensible activities and even concrete actions aimed to reinforce power positions of the states on a global scale. It was only in the early 2015 that we lost our illusion of living in a safe and peaceful home protected from devastation by a nuclear apocalypse. And, all of a sudden, after a brief period of respite, we have found ourselves in a Spinozaesque world aptly described by the quote: --- In the world where “people have as much right as they have power.”It is sufficient to point to the outputs of the today’s media, as well as those of 2014–2015, or to the statements of political leaders. As regards their content, they were “gloomy” and contradictory and, worst of all, they represented a very poor response to the existing situation and its possible evolution.

The peace has become illusory. And once again it has been confirmed that today the power passes from hands to hands rather than from heads to heads. We live in very perilous times.And the anxious leaders seem to have turned to “non-peaceful activities” and contributed to the sickness of the organisation of the today’s world. Quite often, rather than addressing such issues as solidarity and humanity, i.e. the general “struggle for peace,” they target their efforts to conspiracy and intelligence techniques, new arms race, or incitement to war, be it through direct or indirect support of the hotbeds of tension, or even creating them. It is a fact that real leaders would have immediately and right at the beginning prevented the occurrence of the unfortunate and really tragic “migration wave,” which we clearly characterised in the spring of the last year. Sadly, our predictions have come true.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Since last year we have become more preoccupied than in the past with the issues of peace not only in our region or our continent, but in the entire world. We reached the conviction that the certainty that peace and common sense will prevail has weakened. We even think that such certainty is nowadays illusory, in the real meaning of the term. We published frightening facts about the growth of the nuclear potential over a period of more than thirty years, after the model of the WHO, and we also pointed to the fact that there are individuals accepting nuclear confrontation among the leaders of states and superpowers.

Growing fears of a possible demise of peaceful life in Europe and, subsequently, in the regions of Asia and Africa, “erosive” effects of the civil war in eastern Ukraine, the developments in the Middle East, and a controlled increase in the size of the “march” of migrants to the buffer states and their camps, and the subsequent guidance of these flows to Europe, these were the main reasons for establishing the International Peace Committee within our Association.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Together with my friend and recipient of the Golden Biatec, founder and pioneer of “science of the regeneration of damaged organs and tissues” prof. Rongxiang Xu and with the support of such personalities as Prof. Muhammad Yunus, Nobel Peace Prize winner, we established the International Peace Committee. As of 6 August 2015, the Committee had nineteen members.

Between May and December, we presented our ideas and opinions through our spokespersons, as well as our members Prof. Jan Keller, MEP from the Czech Republic, and Dr. Ing. John Campbell, expert in biocybernetics, neurolinguistics, human design, financier, political scientist, architect and political scientist of the Federal Republic of Germany. On the anniversary date of the Hiroshima tragedy, these electors chose in a secret vote the laureate of the “Peace Prize from Slovakia for 2015.”

The vote on nine nominations unequivocally resulted in the election of the most unwavering promoter of peace and security in the world. One third of the votes, i.e. six out of nineteen, went to Pope Francis, as we disclosed at the 105th regular meeting and the overall 249th event of our Association on 29 October 2015. His Holiness regards the gesture very highly, which was restated in a letter of 26 January 2016 from Apostolic Nuncio Mario Giordana. However, the general public will be informed no later than at the winner announcing ceremony held during the 108th regular assembly of the Economic Club on 17 March 2016.

Because we have a genetically encoded the Latin “*Dum spiro spero*,” we will continue to strive – in spite of our lack of success to date – for convening without delay a global peace conference. The event that will address such issues as securing economic and social growth, including the promotion of education, culture and health of the population of the planet. The time has thus come to urgently make a radical change in the thinking and subsequently in the organisation of the world.

Among the major themes of the 1997 annual Davos WEF Forum was the tackling of global priorities. That theme was developed at the time in a memorable and fascinating vision – and challenge, although buried in the dust – of Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission. This was almost twenty years ago, but nobody else has since made such a constructive statement concerning our civilisation. Having said that, there is an excellent universally challenging, inspiring and cautiously optimistic work by prof. Thomas Piketty, “Capital in the 21st Century” of 2013, published last year by IKAR publishing house.

We hope that such “summit of summits” will be convened by Pope Francis or the leaders of world superpowers, the United States, Russia and China. It should no longer be instilled into the minds of our contemporaries that peace can only be achieved by the force of arms – the war. We presented this initiative almost one year ago also to our leaders. Again without success.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In accordance with the Statute of the “Peace Prize from Slovakia for 2015”, and on the initiative of Mr Peter Mihók and Mr Jozef Masarik, I invited the members of the Committee to identify the personality with a relevant profile and achievements as a candidate for the award of its second edition. A personality who, either in person or through electronic technology, will speak at the meeting of the Association and its International Peace Committee about the given issue, thus fulfilling the last requirement for the award of the prize.

I asked the President of the World Chambers Federation, the President of the SCCI and our member Peter Mihók, to inform the candidate for the award – the most important man of the Paris Château de la Muette – at their autumn meeting. What happened was more exceptional than normal in the years of the last decade of the 20th century. The creation of the conditions for a peaceful coexistence among the nations and the states in the second decade of the 21st century, and the solution of global priorities will be addressed in person by the OECD Secretary-General, Mr José Ángel Gurría.

