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*143<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly General Debate: “Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community”*

*27 November, 2021, Madrid, Spain*

**Excellencies,  
Dear guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen.**

First of all, on behalf of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, I wish to cordially greet all the parliamentary delegations attending 143<sup>rd</sup> Assembly of Inter-Parliamentary Union and hope that discussions within this framework will contribute further to the strengthening of the role of parliaments as a whole and our cooperation.

Dear colleagues,

The period that we are passing through right now with its acute challenges puts a heavy burden on global community. Even so-called established democracies struggle to cope and sometimes fail in dealing with the problems. COVID-19 along with deteriorating economic conditions aggravate the situation, which unfortunately leads to further polarization of societies and growing disbelief in political systems. A subtle line between freedom of expression and disinformation faces the risk of being erased altogether.

In those circumstances, the functioning of national parliaments needs to be thoroughly elaborated. I believe that those parliaments that look at the issue not only through legislative framework, but also from a broader perspective, have a chance to overcome divides and build bridges within societies. The parliaments should strengthen their role as a focal point of concerted efforts of elected representatives, the government and civil society.

More importantly, these efforts should not only cover the parliament, but spread to the whole political system and embrace all of a society. The situation with disinformation demands strong legislative efforts from our parliaments in order to further strengthen freedom of expression and eliminate disinformation and its dangerous consequences.

The world community was unprepared to current difficulties that have also derived from the pandemic and took a while to find necessary responses to the situation. Now we need to be prepared for the next steps and focus more on post-COVID recovery phase in order to better face future possible challenges. President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Mr. Ilham Aliyev has already put forward an initiative by suggesting to establish a UN High-Level Panel on Global Recovery from the

COVID-19 that would focus on preparing recommendations on global measures for post-pandemic period. In line with this initiative, I believe, we as parliamentarians should also proceed to debates on post-pandemic period in the near future.

Dear colleagues,

I would like to emphasize my firm belief that promotion of peace and security is a highly important tool for development of democracy, protection of human rights and ensuring sustainable development. Liberation of 20 percent of Azerbaijan's internationally recognized territories from Armenian occupation that lasted for 30 years, enabled us to start the large-scale restoration programs in these territories. These works will enable more than 1 mln. of our IDPs to return their homes.

Trilateral Statement of 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020, signed by the leaders of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia put an end to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Now there is a need to start working on a peace agreement and the process of delimitation and demarcation of the border with Armenia on mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other.

Azerbaijan has repeatedly showed readiness to normalize its relations with Armenia and made several proposals. We hope that the most recent meeting between the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia on 26 November will bring tangible results and lead to the signing of peace agreement and restoration of all communications in the region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In line with our strong support and commitment to interparliamentary cooperation, Azerbaijan, as the chair of the Non-Aligned Movement, has put forward the initiative to develop parliamentary dimension of the Movement. Inaugural Meeting of the Parliamentary Network of the Non-Aligned Movement will be held on 28<sup>th</sup> November on the sidelines of this highly respected Assembly. Expansion and deepening of relations between the parliamentarians of the Movement will serve the global efforts aimed at strengthening peace, democracy, and sustainable development, which also conform to the principles promoted by Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Thank you for your attention.