

Dear colleagues,

I am honored to address this distinguished gathering on behalf of the Parliament of Ukraine and let me express our deep gratitude to our hosts, the Parliament of Spain for the warm hospitality.

Democracy is a political phenomenon, the development of which occurs simultaneously with social transformations and is conditioned by them. The fundamental principle for any democracy is the equality of all citizens under the law .

However, nowadays the democratic model is experiencing new challenges that arose from social and economic situation, covid pandemic, security issues that resulted in decreasing trust in political systems.

Also there is a technical progress, including ever growing use of social media, that posed new challenges and questioned the pillars of the democracy values. New technologies allowed us to reach new levels of connection and communication on one hand, but on the other unexpectedly led us to division, polarization and deepening of societal inequalities.

Moreover democracy in today's world has been stress tested by the pandemic. Polarization, hate, intolerance to other opinions, the growth of mutual distrust and social inequality - the pandemic hit the fundamentals of democratic values.

Splitting society, defamation and persecution of dissidents, whether it be on the issue of vaccinations, climate or any other problem causes diminishing trust in political institutions. And it's particularly dangerous for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. Those who distrust the state may be particularly susceptible to the populist propaganda and simple solutions to difficult issues.

So today our role as Parliamentarians is to be on the frontline, on both national and international level, to guard the democratic values facing these challenges. We have to speak to people in human language and take their concerns seriously. We have to renew the trust in state finding new ways of cooperation with the society, encouraging all its representatives to be engaged in the decision making. We have to find a balance between freedom of speech and limiting the flow of disinformation in the online world.

Ukrainian Parliament is working on new challenges, bringing a wider representation of all the groups of the society including women and young people into the Parliament. In Ukraine we improve our legislation and information policies on covid and exchange our practices with our international partners and so on.

Dear colleagues. I was supposed to end my speech here. However, I changed my mind after the speech of the representative of the Russian Federation. He was curious and confused about the sanctions imposed on him by US, Canada and Ukraine. I would like to remind all honorable colleagues in this Assembly why various countries imposed sanctions against certain Russian companies and officials.

First. Russia annexed and continues to occupy the Ukrainian territory of Crimea. This is confirmed in the UN General Assembly Resolution No.68/262 dated 27 March 2014.

Second. Russian aggression continues in Eastern Ukraine. Where Russian-backed forces occupy 3% of our territory. It is here in the occupied territories was set up the only torture prison in Europe. Where there once was a modern art and culture center, now functions Isolation prison, where Ukrainians are abducted and tortured just because they stand up for their flag and language.

Third. I have a question of my own. Why am I and whole Ukrainian delegation, present here and hundreds of parliamentarians back in Ukraine are under sanctions imposed by Russian Federation?