

**Speech by the Deputy Speaker of the Senate of the Republic of Poland
Mrs Gabriela Morawska-Stanecka
during the 144th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly**

“Getting to zero: Mobilizing parliaments to act on climate change”

Madam President, honourable Members of Parliament, honourable Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

the greatest challenge of an effective climate policy is to influence the various areas of action taken by those in power so that they take climate problems into account in their planning and, ideally, always opt for climate-friendly solutions. The best way to achieve this would be to build a specific mechanism to ensure that climate issues and sustainable development are integrated into the country's strategic planning. This is not an easy task. Many projects turn out to be more expensive and less popular with the electorate if they take climate protection into account. Interest groups, whose arguments can be as socially important as environmental issues, stand in the way.

As Members of Parliament we have a responsibility to develop an appropriate system. We should be educating not only people in our constituencies, but also our colleagues in the chambers of parliament on the importance of environmental protection for all aspects of our lives. It is we ourselves who can ensure that the specialised committees in their work never lose sight of the vision of climate catastrophe that we may face in the nearest future. When working on even the least important law, we must bear in mind the great climate objectives adopted by the international organisations to which we belong. We should make sure that we safeguard the social groups most affected by the consequences of climate change. Environmental protection is, of course, a problem of global significance, but the decisions taken in our parliaments on a daily basis have an invaluable influence on the effectiveness of global action. This subject is particularly close to my heart, and it is with great interest that I would like to focus today on finding common solutions to the problems of our planet.

However, it is impossible not to refer now to the situation Ukraine is facing today, and, with Ukraine, the whole world. The threat of nuclear war could be the ultimate threat to us and our environment. The conflict caused by Russia casts new light on climate challenges. Making Europe dependent on oil or gas imports on such a large scale gives the Russian

dictator powerful tools to influence our decisions. Attempts to diversify sources of supply are extremely difficult and costly. The search for alternative sources of energy at this point not only began to be justified on ecological grounds, but became an element of securing the vital interests of the state. It is a guarantee of self-sufficiency, not only from the economic but also from the political point of view. We were seriously concerned that this side of the conflict, in terms of the diplomatic dispute that was taking place, might tip the scales in favour of the occupying power. I am proud of us Europeans for being able to stand together, despite the threats that were made.

Faced with the tragedy unfolding in Ukraine, we did not hesitate for a moment as to which side was ours. We are showing that we are strong through our Euro-Atlantic alliance, strong through our ties of cooperation and strong through our neighbourhood. Poland supports Ukraine in every way possible in the current situation - at diplomatic, military and neighbourhood level. Our citizens, out of the need of their hearts, have become very actively involved in these activities, inviting refugees from Ukraine into their homes, collecting food and other necessary things. Thousands of volunteers are working everywhere to help refugees.

But the threat we face is like a disease that attacks tissue. We try to prevent it, to treat it. Nevertheless, in the end, a radical operation has to be performed, which should bring a cure. Helping the refugees is very important, but the most important thing is to end this war and punish those guilty of the crimes committed against the Ukrainian people.

That is why Russia's imperial ambitions must be continually hammered with truly tough sanctions, and actions that bring tangible economic losses to Russian politicians and oligarchs must be continued. This is what Poland is fighting for internationally, for Ukraine and for all of us.

After all, Russian aggression threatens everyone. It threatens Western values and the stability to which we have so easily become accustomed. It also poses a direct threat to our environment and our planet by threatening to cut off fuel supplies and by frightening us with its nuclear arsenal. We very much appreciate the action taken in recent days by the European Union, by the members of the G7, led by the USA, by every country involved on the right side. Maybe if we were able to say together that our interests with Russia will not stand above the protection of human rights, we might be able to look more favourably in the future on a joint programme to develop green energy infrastructure.

The threat from Russia is a threat of conflict on a scale I cannot even imagine. That is why, as Poland, we are stating plainly today that the war taking place in Ukraine is an act of genocide and a violation of all humanitarian principles. This war has already changed our perspective, and there can be no return to tolerating the actions of the aggressor.

I wish all citizens of Ukraine all the best and I hope that, thanks to your strength, thanks to the actions and support of your allies, Kiev's Maidan square will not become a place of battle. May the vision of Ukrainian citizens coming to this square to take a walk, to spend time with family and friends, be a vision that will come true thanks to your courage and your dedication. I hope that we will be able to fight together for the sake of protecting the climate and not for the sake of saving lives of our children.