

Mr Gennaro Migliore - ITALY

Mr Chairman,

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

Let me thank again Rwanda for the warm and friendly welcome and the IPU for the outstanding organization.

As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently said, gender equality is “the unfinished business of our time”. Gender equality can be seen as the catalyst of several policy challenges and goals.

Over 20 years after UN Security Resolution 1325, it is important as ever to ensure women’s representation in all matters concerning peace and security.

Against this background, which shows the contents of a long-term struggle, we must place those experiences and lives that will leave a stamp on our era.

Today I want to focus on three of these unfortunately numerous demonstrations of how much work there is still to be done.

The first experience relates to the shocking developments of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Since 24 February, the world has changed: the most dangerous crises in many decades have broken out, that is food and energy crises. But, above all, the life of an entire people has been turned upside down: these people are forced to suffer systematic war crimes and human rights violations.

We know that there are people who think that the hope for peace is one and the same as the absurd claim to be left in peace! We know that there are people who want to teach the brave Ukrainian people how to resist, people who equate victims and aggressors.

To these people we say: go and explain this, if you can, to the six million refugees, elderly, children and women.

Women are more vulnerable because, as seen in the temporarily occupied areas of Ukraine, they are regularly targeted by such war tactics as rape and sexual assault. They are more often victims of forced migration or displacement.

We will not forget the voices of women voice in Ukraine, just like we will not forget Russian crimes against them.

The second relates to women in Afghanistan. Let's face it, after the hasty withdrawal of the international troops and the consequent emotional impact that this generated, the world has forgotten the Afghans. I am happy that the Afghan parliament in exile has been admitted here as an observer, but we must realize that this is not enough. Because, if it is true that the world has forgotten women in Afghanistan, it is equally true that the Taliban criminals have not forgotten them. The Taliban's first goal was to bring women back into a state of submission and systematic denial of their fundamental rights. Forced marriages, sexual abuse, repressive public morals are again the rule. But the thing they worked hard on was the education ban for women. Taliban violence knows very well the phrase uttered by the great Ghanaian pedagogue James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey "If you educate a man you educate an individual, if you educate a woman you educate a nation" and precisely because they know this principle they will do everything to prevent women's education.

The third story I want to mention is the brutal repression taking place in Iran. The brutal killing of Masha and many other Iranian women by Iran's theocratic regime is only one of the symbols of unrestrained violence against women. We are seeing the dire consequences of the "moral police" in the streets of Tehran. I want to say this forcefully: there is no revolutionary morality in what they are doing. *Their* behaviour is immoral, violent and lacks humanity. We support those women who cut their hair as a sign of solidarity. We support those women who claim their life and their freedom. Women, life, freedom is our cry before the world.

Women are the main victims of wars, forced migration, repression and violence by authoritarian regimes; they are the victims of terrorism and are threatened by male violence even when they are at home. I believe the root cause of all this is the fear that our societies might change for real. We must know that women, even when they are victims, cannot be represented exclusively as victims, with benevolent paternalism. No! Women must be seen for their extraordinary potential and strength, for the resilience that, despite centuries of hardships, they continue to have.

For this reason, as parliamentarians, as *male* parliamentarians, we must know that we will have to fight together with women knowing that we have to give up unfair privileges, which we did not deserve as men, but which are the reflection of a unfair society. If there are few female parliamentarians, then the number of seats taken by men must be reduced. If a woman's wages is lower than that of a man for the same job, then the woman's wage must be raised and the man's wage must be decreased. If a man thinks he can decide make decisions on which are for a woman to make, then it is above all the man who must change his dull mentality. No-one ever carved in stone that things must stay that way. We, *we men*, must change our behaviour and our patriarchal mind-set.

Thank you!