

**The 145th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union  
Kigali, Republic of Rwanda, 11 -15 October 2022**

General Debate on the topic:

**Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments  
as drivers of change for a more resilient  
and peaceful world**

Distinguished President Pacheco,  
Honourable Secretary General Chungong,  
Esteemed Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year we mark the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the *Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments*, which was adopted at the 127<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the IPU in Quebec. I am proud to say that the **Republic of Serbia has made a great progress in each of the seven key areas of action** that we recognised as strategically important.

In the Republic of Serbia, there is a high awareness of the importance of gender equality, and there are **relevant institutions and laws that regulate this area in accordance with the highest standards**, as assessed in the Report on the Voluntary Conduct of a Self-Assessment on Gender Sensitivity of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. Let me remind you that we organised the evaluation in cooperation with the IPU in December 2017.

**Our actions are based on a solid gender-responsive legal and strategic framework.** In addition to the fact that gender equality and equal opportunities for both women and men are included in the basic democratic principles prescribed by the **Constitution**, the principle of gender equality is also included in the **Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination**. Moreover, an umbrella law on this issue has also been adopted – the **Law on Gender Equality**. This modern gender equality law has been adopted in compliance with the best possible practices of the countries in the region, Europe and around the world, ensuring an even better position of women in society.

In 2017, the process of improvement of programme budgeting model was initiated by introducing the principle of gender-responsive budgeting. This made Serbia one of few countries in the world with the gender-responsive budgeting integrated in its Law on Budget System.

In addition, **amendments to criminal, labour and family laws** have been adopted, marking the beginning of a resolute fight to prevent any form of violence against women.

At the same time, we have been investing efforts in making women more visible in politics and in ensuring they exercise their right to be elected to the highest state positions, that is, to the positions of decision-makers. **Amendments to electoral laws** stipulate that **at least 40 percent** of candidates must be of the less represented gender in electoral lists for parliamentary and local elections. This was another important step towards women's greater participation and influence in the political life of Serbia, as well as in the institutions where the most important political decisions are made. Our goal is not to stop at just increasing the number of women, but to continuously work on eliminating any form of gender inequality and affirming the political participation of women in the highest possible positions, which is what the concept of gender-sensitive parliaments implies.

On this occasion, I would like to emphasise the importance of the work of the **Women's Parliamentary Network in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia**, which is an informal but very important and influential political body in the National Assembly, actively engaged in the protection of women's rights. I am proud of our female colleagues who have been working committedly and achieving significant results within the framework of the Women's Parliamentary Network, ever since its establishment in 2013. Through their continuous work they are a recognised factor in the field of gender equality and improvement of the position of women in Serbia, both at the regional, as well as at the European level. Our parliamentary **Focus Group for the development of oversight mechanisms on SDG implementation** has also supported the same goal within its scope of work (especially through Goals No. 5 and 16).

I assure you that in my **new capacity of the Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia**, I will continue to encourage and support all the initiatives of my female and male colleagues in every way, so that the current legislature could further promote gender responsibility and support new gender equality-related priorities.

However, allow me to underline that the National Assembly is not alone in this process, and that there is a **true commitment of the entire state to this common goal**. This is why we work in partnership with the **gender-responsive Government** of the Republic of Serbia, primarily through the **Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue**, as well as the **Coordination Body for Gender Equality**, but also through adopted normative frameworks, such as the Strategy for Preventing and Combating Gender-Based Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the National Strategy for Prevention and

Protection against Discrimination, that is, the National Strategy for Gender Equality.

An additional independent state body for the promotion and control of the implementation of the principle of equality in all areas of social life is the **Commissioner for the protection of equality**, who is elected by the National Assembly and through whose actions and reports we additionally find segments in which it is possible to improve this area.

We use a special instrument to measure our progress in achieving gender equality – as the first non-EU country to introduce the **EU Gender Equality Index**. I can note with pleasure that we are recording continuous progress in the Gender Equality Index.

All of us together are sending a very clear message of the state – that we want to improve gender equality and the position of women in Serbia in the best possible way. As a symbol of this joint action, we have **established the national Day of Gender Equality**, marked every year on 11<sup>th</sup> June.

**Nevertheless, we must not be complacent with what has been achieved so far.** Therefore, it is necessary to uncompromisingly continue an active and continuous struggle with a view to overall improvement of the position of women in society as a basic priority in our work. No emergency situation, nor a crisis, can become an excuse, or a reason for violating any human and women's right and for postponing the implementation of key values we have jointly decided to fight for.

Everything we have done in previous years, whether it is about more women in political life, economic empowerment of women, or the fight against gender-based violence, has been recognised at the international level. In this context, I would like to highlight the **exceptional cooperation we have had with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in this process**. This is also an opportunity to thank the Inter-Parliamentary Union for the great efforts it invests in promoting gender equality, as well as for the support it provides to parliaments around the world in this area.

Rest assured that the **National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia** will remain **committed to the implementation of the *Plan of Action for Gender Sensitive Parliaments*** and will be open to any initiative that contributes to raising awareness of the importance of gender equality as a prerequisite for the progress of the entire society and one of the fundamental values of a democratic state.

Thank you for your attention.