

## Georgia Speaker's Speech at IPU Angola

24 October 2023

*Dear Colleagues,*

I feel honored to address you today on the importance of parliaments in promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions.

Current bloody conflicts around the world are derailing the global path to peace and prosperity, having devastating consequences for peoples and communities, especially socially vulnerable groups of population.

In current complex geopolitical setting, we do better realize the value of peace. We, the speakers of parliaments, have a crucial role to play in promoting the rule of law and protecting human rights, fostering open and accountable institutions to ensure peaceful, stable, and prosperous environment for our peoples.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Democracy is only as strong as its institutions. In fact, stable state institutions are the bedrock of a strong and vibrant democracy and a backbone of any prosperous society. They protect individual rights and freedoms, provide continuity and consistency in governance, foster transparency and accountability, and ensure that policies and laws are implemented in a fair and effective manner. Without these institutions, democracy becomes vulnerable.

It was the establishment of effective institutional architecture that made Georgia one of the frontrunners in effective and innovative public services, fight against corruption and organised crime, transparency and accountability. Georgia's progress is properly reflected in influential international rankings.

However, dear friends, in recent years, we have witnessed a rise in disinformation campaigns that aim to manipulate public opinion, distort the truth and undermine the trust we place in our democratic institutions. And Georgia too, despite the above-mentioned spectacular achievements, is not immune from the unprecedented challenge. The problem consists of, first, external geopolitical pressure and dangers of foreign interference; and, second, rising domestic radicalism and populism.

*Externally,*

Russia has been ferociously undermining the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia by occupying two of its historic Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions; refusing to follow its own international commitments, and maintaining instability and crime on ground.

This must end. Disrespecting the key principles and values of international law opens the Pandora box that has a potential to drag the entire world in the swamp of unseen chaos. And the vocal voice of each of you in support of international law, thus in support of Georgia's territorial integrity, is vital. In this regard, we are grateful that due to solidarity of so many of you, UN General Assembly Resolution on status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Georgia's Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region got

the record high supportive votes in 2023. I would like to kindly ask your continued support on this matter.

*Internally,*

In order to fend off the challenge of increasing domestic radicalism and populism, we have to (1) continue fighting disinformation narratives; and (2) be trustworthy, credible, and swift in our outreach to our electorate and general population. Much has been said about the ways to tackle disinformation, so let me focus more on the communication and outreach. In fact, communication between the national parliament and the population becomes critically important for the stability of the democratic political process.

In the Parliament of Georgia, we put much effort into strengthening the bonds of trust between people and the Parliament through promoting open, accountable and transparent governance. For example, the Georgian Parliament is among the global frontrunners in terms of the Open Governance. We have also forged an agreement with a platform that represents the great majority of non-governmental organisations across Georgia's regions and sectors in order to ensure more inclusive and informed decision-making.

We make sure that the parliamentary processes are accessible both physically and online to boost openness and transparency of the Parliament of Georgia and raise awareness about the legislative and oversight activities of the Parliament among the public.

Moreover, the Parliament pays particular attention to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals that acknowledge that without peace, justice, and strong institutions, progress towards achieving the SDGs will be hindered.

Finally, we are working on the establishment of the Civic Education Center to promote synergies among the Parliament, schools and universities, and to facilitate more active engagement of the youth in parliamentary processes.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

In any democratic society, the role of state institutions cannot be overstated. These institutions are the pillars that uphold the principles of democracy, protect the rights of citizens, and ensure the smooth functioning of the government.

We, as parliamentarians, shall do our utmost in these volatile times to protect our democracies via defending and advocating for state institutions, internally and externally. This way we can create an environment that is conducive to long-term development, peace and prosperity.

Thank you.