

Address by Mr. **Edmunds Teirumnieks**,
Head of the **Latvian** National Group to the IPU,
on *Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions*

October 2023, Luanda

Mr. President,

Dear Colleagues!

Today's topics has been discussed a lot, however, the achieved results require the search for the new and more effective ways – how to make parliaments and governmental institutions stronger? How to make citizens to trust them more?

In two thousand twenty-two (2022) the Global Peace index found that the world is at its lowest point of peacefulness in the last fifteen years. In two thousand twenty-three (2023) the average level of global peacefulness again declined by zero point four (0.4%) percent. Peacefulness in seventy - nine countries has worsened.

The use of brutal force in solving any problem is already becoming like normal. But we cannot justify it. We have to work hard to achieve the peaceful coexistence in the world – listening to all voices of society.

Some insights on how Parliament of Latvia allows the public to get involved in the creation of laws.

Already ten years ago a national citizen legislative initiatives' platform Mana Balss (literally *My Voice*) was launched in Latvia. The aim was to help in the democratization of society and country, to provide a possibility for the citizens to promote their initiatives and gain support for further submission of them to the Parliament. After the initiative is

approved by My Voice it should collect ten thousand (10 000) signatures in order to be submitted to the Saeima.

In ten years My Voice has had almost three hundred thousand (285 000) unique users and more than one and half (1.41) a million votes, which is considerable number for a county of two million people. Every year about thirty percent (30%) of the population are visitors of the platform. This national citizen's platform is the most successful case of internet activism in Latvia and according to them - in the world!

My Voice has a very good rate of success - approximately half of the public initiatives are either supported by Saeima or are in the process of review. Initiatives cover the widest spectrum of topics - tax, education policy, penal practices, demographic, vaccination issues and others.

In numbers – this year within nine month thirty-two (32) initiatives were submitted to the Saeima, two (2) of them already became laws, twenty-three (23) applications are still in progress, seven (7) has been rejected.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Latvia is a small country on the world map, but our experience from the previous century, going through the war, occupation and deportations, is significant. We understand the evil and sufferings of the war. And war today is raging not only in Ukraine, but in the Middle East, Africa and other places.

Dear Colleagues!

I want to remind you that our nations have given us – parliamentarians a mandate to shape people's present and future. And we have an obligation

to do everything in our power to stop the war madness justifying killed children, raped women, broken dreams and lives.

Nobody has rights to convince others with force that his or her culture, faith, religion, world order or other things are better than others'. No one should go unpunished.

But I want to end on a brighter note! The women's wisdom of life and innovative approach of young people in politics cannot be overestimated. And we in Latvia are moving toward good results – in Parliament: thirty-two (32%) percent of women, forty-three (43%) percent under age of 45, in Government: thirty-one (31%) percent of women ministers. In leading positions - female Speaker and female Prime minister.

Thank you!