

Speech by Hon. Angelo Farrugia, Speaker of the House of Representatives

General Debate, High Level Segment

'Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16)'

IPU 147th Assembly, Luanda, Angola

23-27 October 2023

Dear Madame Chair

Honourable colleagues,

Distinguished parliamentarians,

Sustainable Development Goals should not be treated as targets written on paper and put on the shelf. Sustainable development goals are crucial targets to aim at securing a sustainable future for future generations. No matter how challenging such goals might seem, it is of utmost importance that commitments are met.

National Parliaments have an obligation to oversee that all targets set by their respective countries are being implemented and met in a timely manner. However, there are those targets, including the one that we are discussing today, in which the role of national Parliaments is crucial.

Esteemed colleagues,

Peace, justice and strong institutions are inter-twinned. Violence in all its forms is strongly related to bad governance, absence of the rule of law and disrespect for fundamental freedoms. Corrupt, non-inclusive and unaccountable institutions generate dissatisfaction among peoples and are a driver of conflict. State security forces that are not held accountable when they act without due respect for human rights set off a dangerous spiral of violence.

Weak institutions, corruption, insecurity, and inefficient and unreliable justice systems remain a threat to sustainable development. Fear of violence, lack of safety and an unsafe environment hinder the personal development of individuals, while also affecting entrepreneurship and societal well-being. Institutions that do not function according to legitimate laws are prone to arbitrariness and abuse of power and are therefore less capable of delivering public services to everyone. Freedom of expression, both in private and in public, must be guaranteed, while legislation and policy must be applied without any form of discrimination.

National Parliament should set an example when dealing with transparency and accountability. In 2017 the role of standards in Public Life Commissioner together with the Standards in Public Life Standing Committee were established. It is the only Committee in the Maltese Parliament in which there is equal representation from Government and Opposition and is chaired by me as Speaker. The aim of this committee is to keep the standards of persons in public life as high as possible and therefore try to build trust between citizens and their representatives in Parliament.

As elected representatives of our respective communities, Parliaments enact legislation and are in direct contact with their respective constituency. Therefore, Members of Parliament are instrumental to promote and foster fundamental values of non-violence, respect and openness to others, tolerance, solidarity and peace. Through our parliamentary work we need to reaffirm the importance of mutual understanding and dialogue as the basis for any functional society and inter-personal relationship. By mutual understanding, I do not mean the homogenization of society. It does not mean that both sides of the political spectrum agree on everything they discuss. On the contrary, through dialogue we create a vibrant hub to exchange different views and beliefs. Subsequently, they reinforce each other to create long lasting peaceful co-existence.

However, peace, justice and strong institutions are not only required on a national level. We meet today in Angola as a group of Parliamentarians from around the world in a multilateral set up. This gathering clearly amplifies the need to also have a globally structured and strong institutions aimed at procuring peace, justice and understanding.

Unfortunately, I must admit that we are witnessing the opposite of what we as humans should be aiming to achieve. What we are witnessing in the Middle East is of great concern not only to the parties directly involved in the unfolding

situation but also to the region as a whole. I sincerely appeal to all parties to refrain from any sort of power politics and move towards dialogue, understanding and lasting peace. It is equally important that multilateral institutions like the United Nations continue in its efforts to promote the observance of international law and the need to have strong global institutions to ensure that peace and justice are a priority of all nations. In today's global village, the role of the United Nations has become even more important to achieve these objectives.

Colleagues,

I would like to conclude by sharing with you a very short but meaningful sentence by the late President of the United States John F. Kennedy who once said.

'World peace, like community peace, does not require that each man love his neighbour - it requires only that they live together with mutual tolerance, submitting their disputes to a just and peaceful settlement.'

Thank you.