

STATEMENT

by Hakob Arshakyan, Vice-President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia at the
General Debate

147th IPU Assembly

Luanda, 23-27 October 2023

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

Madam President,

Excellencies, heads of the Parliaments

Fellow parliamentarians,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to thank our Angolan hosts for the excellent organization of the Assembly and warm hospitality extended to all delegates.

The 16th goal of sustainable development is dedicated to promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

However, ongoing, and new violent conflicts around the world are derailing the global path to peace and achievement of Goal 16. Alarming, the year 2022 witnessed a more than 50 per cent increase in conflict-related civilian deaths – the first since the adoption of Agenda 2030.

High levels of armed violence and insecurity have a destructive impact on a country's development.

Dear Colleagues,

While speaking about peace and justice let me address the situation in the South Caucasus region.

On 19 September unfortunately Azerbaijan launched one more large-scale aggression against the people of Nagorno Karabakh violating international law and the Trilateral Statement of 9 November 2020 which they signed.

The military attack showcased that the goal was to finalize the ethnic cleansing of the Armenian population from Nagorno Karabakh, as well as involving the Republic of Armenia into a new war. The aggression resulted in hundreds of victims and injured, including civilian population, women and children. Over one hundred thousand people were forcibly displaced from Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia.

It is sad, extremely sad, that despite hundreds of alarms, decisions of the International Court of Justice, resolutions of the European Parliament, PACE and the parliaments of individual countries, appeals of executive bodies, the international community, we all were unable to prevent the ethnic cleansing of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The attack followed more than nine months of blockade of the Lachin corridor, the only road connecting Nagorno Karabakh with Armenia and the rest of the world. Blockade affected electricity, gas, food and medical supplies, emergency healthcare. The International Court of Justice made two rulings on lifting the blockade and opening the Corridor. However, these rulings were never implemented by Azerbaijan. This was the prelude to the ethnic cleansing that reached its aim in the following days.

The government of Armenia and people did everything to receive and shelter more than 100,000 Armenians - victims of the ethnic cleansing in Nagorno Karabakh. We could receive them due to the people of Armenia and democracy.

People, because sometimes they did not wait for what the government would do. They provided their forcibly displaced compatriots with essential goods and temporary shelter. And the democracy, because due to Democracy and open economy non-corrupt government we had enough economy growth to support 100,000 people of Nagorno Karabakh.

We are grateful to our international partners, which have already made and/or will continue to make allocations aimed at overcoming the humanitarian crisis caused by the forced displacement of Nagorno Karabakh Armenians.

Around 150km sq still stands occupied by Azerbaijan due to aggression against internationally recognized sovereign territory Armenia.

Armenia does not have territorial claims to its neighbors, Armenia is committed peace agenda in the region. Armenia's position is to establish peaceful relations based on the mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity of states.

Armenia and Azerbaijan should open their roads for each other. border and other relevant control services should operate, based on the jurisdiction, sovereignty, and legislation of the countries. This should be done based on the principle of reciprocity and equality.

Stretching from East to the West, the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean, North to South, from the Persian Gulf to the Black Sea. We name this project the Crossroads of Peace.

Armenia is ready to ensure the safety of cargo, vehicles, people, pipelines, electric lines in its territory, because the Crossroads of Peace implies the passage of pipelines and power lines as well. We call international partners to take part in this large-scale project.

This kind of solutions are also very important for the Republic of Armenia because our country has been under blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey for 30 years.

The peace agenda in our region does not have an alternative. We are committed to the path of democracy to achieve a stable and lasting peace. We are resolute in our choice and are looking forward to the support by our international partners.

Thank you very much for your attention.