

General Debate on the theme:

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

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“Give peace a chance”, John Lennon sang in 1969.

But are we giving peace a chance in 2023?

When we look at the world today we see a lack of peace, we see violence and wars. In Ukraine, in Israel and Palestine, in Nagorno Karabakh, in the Sahel, Yemen, I could go on... It looks worse than in many years.

We spend billions on all kinds of deadly weapons and wars. Just imagine what that amount of money could have done if invested to help reach the Sustainable Development Goals. Our biggest challenge is the climate crisis, but instead of combining all our resources to deal with it, we use our resources to destroy fellow human beings and food for millions.

A report says that one year's military spending by the top 10 military spenders would pay for promised international climate finance for 15 years. In my small home country, Norway, we are going to spend 1,5 billion dollars more on the defence sector next year. Its one of the

biggest increases in our whole Fiscal Budget. And still it isn't enough to reach the goal of NATO on two percent of the gross national income.

How can we stop this spiral of more violence, war and ever-growing defence budgets?

I think one of the answers is strong institutions with tools to help resolve conflicts without violence and war. This was also the original thought behind the IPU when it started. Despite years of good work, hundreds of meetings and speeches, it seems like we are still way to far from that goal.

Where are our strong international institutions? How can we work to make IPU a better tool for actually solving conflicts?

And what about the UN? It has been frustrating to see the UN Security Council's failure to act on Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Something needs to be done with the UN Security Council. Is it representative? The UN membership has gone from 53 to 193 states. The council's composition has expanded only once, in 1965, with the addition of four elected seats.

And then there is the use of the veto. Is it right that an aggressor that has violated international law can sit on the council and block decisions?

But the UN General Assembly where **all countries** are represented has voted with a huge majority to demand Russia's immediate withdrawal, reaffirming Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Still, unfortunately, it doesn't seem to change much on the ground.

But is there hope? A year ago the IPU-assembly was held in beautiful Rwanda. A country with a horrible history of almost 1 million people killed in a 100-day period, just a few decades ago. Many of us came back home with strong impressions after visiting the genocide museum. But to see what Rwanda has achieved after, when it comes to peace, reconciliation and development was impressive. That gives hope. Also globally.

To help secure justice and peace internationally, more than in many years we now need strong international institutions. That demands that if something isn't working, we must fix it.

This assembly might not be the best singers to sing "Give peace a chance", but we could be the politicians who gives peace a real chance!