

## SPEECH

By Mr. Stavros Kalafatis, Greece

Estimated, Secretary General, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear colleagues

It is a special honor to address you today, in the context of the 148th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. We are here today, representatives of Parliaments from all over the world, because we firmly believe in the power of Parliamentary Diplomacy on a global, regional and bilateral level.

We express our faith and belief in the important role of parliamentary diplomacy as a catalyst for mutual understanding and deeper cooperation between states and peoples. But also as an institution that promotes dialogue for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, the consolidation of security, the protection of the Rule of Law and, ultimately, Democracy.

In the face of modern challenges that know no borders, such as the climate crisis, global threats to public health, immigration and the digital revolution, artificial intelligence, but also in the face of conflicts with a visible risk of dramatic expansion, in the face of violations of human rights and the rules of International Law, inter-parliamentary diplomacy can highlight common principles and universal values, capable of indicating commonly accepted solutions and jointly agreed responses.

We can proceed today towards goals dictated by tomorrow. But also to achieve the maximum possible cooperation in the face of challenges that cannot wait and threats whose outbreak we cannot withstand.

For all these reasons, the topic of the 148th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is extremely important and timely. It is more than certain that the fruitful democratic workshop of political dialogue and synthesis of opinions of representatives of 180 national parliaments - its members, shall:

- Strengthen the cooperation and deepen the relations between Parliaments and, by extension, ties among peoples.
- Highlight national priorities of the countries and positions on international issues at the parliamentary level,

- Build bridges for the construction of peace and understanding,

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, through national parliaments, in cooperation with other international organizations, can play a more active role in matters of world peace, security and stability.

It is also a common belief that peace is a fundamental condition for addressing global challenges such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which the IPU aptly chose as the strategic focus of its policy for 2024. Given that, as noted by the Stockholm International Research Institute for Peace, 56 states faced armed conflict in 2023, the global parliamentary community has a long way to go.

On this path, the role of Parliamentary Friendship Groups between countries is particularly important. They can contribute to a better understanding of problems through parliamentary dialogue, mediation and conflict avoidance, the defense of human rights, the implementation of international commitments, the development of sincere cooperation aimed at mutual benefit.

In the Hellenic Parliament, Parliamentary Friendship Groups have been set up and cooperate with 91 national Parliaments. They strengthen the bilateral relations of friendship and cooperation and contribute to the deepening of Democracy and cooperation in the face of modern challenges.

And as the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis recently emphasized at the 3rd Summit on Democracy, we must focus on:

a) Unity against aggression. Democracies have a duty to unite and join their forces against aggressive behavior by states, any behavior that violates International and Humanitarian Law.

b) Democratic states must regain the absolute trust of their citizens. Democracy is the only system that can provide the values that citizens truly desire: security, prosperity, freedom, respect and justice.

and c) It is necessary to regulate the technology that is starting to bring about significant changes in the way our economies and societies function".

It is imperative that the new challenges, new threats, dangers to the Planet, to our countries and peoples, create fertile ground for meaningful discussions and

bold joint decisions. It is necessary and - I believe - a common goal, that parliamentary diplomacy contributes to achieving results of hope and optimism for the citizens of our countries.

Thank you.