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Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding

Madam President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Speakers of Parliaments, Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today.

Peace is at the heart of both our societies and the international community. Meanwhile, understanding is central to peace. These are the two major conditions for the future of every state.

As democratically elected parliamentarians, we have to take responsibility and act. Not only must we be concerned about the internal stability of our countries and the peaceful coexistence of all groups of society, but we must also become defenders of the principles of international law. We have a number of instruments that we could use to this end.

First of all, we must not remain indifferent. We must not remain on the sidelines. We must underscore the critical importance of a unified international response to uphold the principles of the UN Charter and defend the integrity of the rules-based order. Our support for the sovereignty of each country must be unwavering, and our support for a country defending its sovereign internationally recognised territory should go without saying. At the same time, we must realise that no conflict, wherever it takes place geographically, is far from us, as we all feel the consequences of every conflict.

Lithuania is a European country and only four hundred kilometres away from Ukraine and Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine. We can see the consequences of this brutal war in the eyes of every Ukrainian war refugee we meet in Lithuania. You are feeling the consequences of this war, too. Russia's hindering of Ukraine's exports through the Black Sea ports puts pressure on the vulnerable across the globe. This disrupts people's lives and increases migration flows.

Today Ukraine is not only fighting for its own country. Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine is a manifest violation of the UN Charter, which poses an acute challenge to global peace and security.

As we do not remain indifferent to those who suffer, we must also take absolute action against the aggressors. International isolation must be enforced first and foremost. The aggressor cannot be allowed to participate in international forums on an equal footing nor have the privilege of exercising the right of veto.

Parliamentary diplomacy may not be the most powerful weapon in this context, but it can be really effective and impactful if we all work together.

Most parliaments have a tradition of creating parliamentary friendship groups with other parliaments. Parliamentary friendship groups are the simplest means of establishing parliamentary contacts and increasing understanding.

The next step is cooperation in specific areas. All parliaments have committees and commissions responsible for specific areas. Cooperation at this level creates added value by enabling the sharing of experiences and ideas.

Development cooperation adds similar value, not only in terms of increasing understanding but also in terms of bringing about improvement.

All of these measures show that we have the tools to communicate and increase the understanding leading to peace. All we need is the will and effort that we, as parliamentarians, can demonstrate.

Thank you for your attention.