

**Speech of Prof.Dr Sahiba Gafarova,
Speaker of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan
The 149th IPU Assembly
“Harnessing science, technology and innovation (STI)
for a more peaceful and sustainable future”
14 October, 2024**

Excellencies,
Dear participants,
Ladies and gentlemen.

I greet you all at the General Debate of the 149th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and wish our deliberations to be successful and productive.

Dear participants,

Science, technology, and innovation have always been central to development aspirations of societies. Today, their critical role in achieving Sustainable Development Goals has been widely acknowledged. Indeed, given that STI are closely related to most of the SDGs, they have enormous potential to make a crucial impact on the realization phase of the SDGs.

Unfortunately, according to reports, with only five years remaining before the expiration of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, only 17 percent of SDG targets are on track to be met on time. This is quite a worrying situation.

Global community has put forward determination to achieve its collectively defined development goals for the benefit of all. Until now, dozens of resolutions, declarations have been adopted, many forums have been held, where clear intentions and commitments have been articulated. Instead, inequalities still remain intact, several challenges slow down and even set back progress, the gap between developed and developing countries further widens.

Taking into consideration, the current situation, it is high time to take real steps and provide viable solutions.

Dear participants,

Talking about the role of science, technology and innovation in building more peaceful and sustainable future, the issue of their accessibility and affordability comes to the forefront.

If they are only accessible and affordable to developed countries, communities and individuals, then such situation will not provide any solutions and negative impacts of any given challenge will only further increase.

The lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic, when certain countries tried to prioritize their own needs for vaccines, using their technological advantages, should not be forgotten.

If we aspire to achieve collective realization of SDGs and thus leave no one behind, STI should be accessible and affordable to all. Developing countries should identify the measures that are needed to integrate science, technology and innovation policies into their national development strategies. But this integration should be promoted through extensive cooperation in financial and technical assistance, capacity-building, technology transfer, sharing experiences and best practices.

Let me say that parliaments can and have to play an active role in creating favorable environment for promotion of STI, formulating national development programs, supporting technology sharing and contributing to strengthening partnerships between the countries.

In this context, I would like to commend the role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which not only possesses political will, but also practical tools to drive parliaments' joint efforts forward and make their voices heard.

Dear participants,

Science, technology and innovation maintains a central place also in my country Azerbaijan's development agenda. SDG goals and targets have already been incorporated into national development plans and strategies. Modern innovations and competitive human capital are one of the five priority areas of the new socio-economic development strategy until 2030.

A digitally-focused society that supports cutting edge technology industries and innovation, increasing the technological capacities of the economy are envisaged as the driving force for development. Besides, STI are important driving force for Azerbaijan's activities in developing its renewable energy potential and establishing green energy zones in the liberated from Armenian occupation Garabagh and Eastern Zangazur regions.

Dear colleagues,

I firmly believe that in such an interdependent world, where global challenges demand collective responses, countries have moral obligation to facilitate each other's

development aspirations. Since 2020, Azerbaijan has provided humanitarian, economic, and technical assistance worth 330 million US Dollars to over 140 nations.

In the framework of the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement Contact Group on fight against COVID-19 held in Azerbaijan in March 2023, His Excellency, Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, declared two Global Calls to support the post-pandemic recovery of Africa and Small Island Developing States. The Calls envisage direct financial support, enhancing education opportunities, capacity building and other technical tools.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Many argue that science, technology and innovation initiatives should address all three dimensions of sustainable development - economic development, social progress and environmental protection.

I believe, in the face of the urgent global challenge such as climate change, environmental protection gains an utmost significance. Because, it is the most pressing issue in our quest for transforming the world into a better place to live for the sake of present and future generations. This is precisely one of the main goals of all COPs, the next of which - COP29 is fast approaching. It will be held in Baku, Azerbaijan in November this year and preparations are in full swing.

Technology has an important place within the vision of COP29 Azerbaijani Presidency, because it is a crucial component of the global response to climate change. It plays a pivotal role for facilitating both effective mitigation and adaptation action.

Azerbaijani Presidency has put forward 14 initiatives, one of which is Green Digital Action initiative. The landmark first ever Digitalization Day will also be hosted at COP29, which will offer a platform to elevate the discourse on the indispensable role of digital technologies in confronting the climate crisis. A dedicated high-level roundtable and the associated Ministerial Declaration will also be launched on this day.

Dear colleagues,

Taking into consideration importance of the issue of climate change in parliamentary deliberations, the IPU and the parliament of Azerbaijan will organize a Parliamentary Meeting in the framework of the COP29. Our teams are already finalizing the preparations for this event.

I call on all of you to take an active part in this meeting. Together, we can turn it into an important milestone of parliamentary contribution to multilateral climate action. We will be glad to see you in Baku.

I thank you for your attention.