

147th IPU Assembly - General Debate
Statement by the Head of the Austrian Delegation
Mr Reinhold Lopatka, MP
Luanda, Angola

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Madame Speaker,
Honourable President,
Honourable Speakers,
Colleagues and Friends,

First of all, let me thank our hosts for their hospitality in enabling us to come together for the 147th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentarian Union – an organisation which has always been standing for dialog and peace.

Unfortunately, the global situation has worsened dramatically: The ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, the recent terror by Hamas against Israeli civilians and now the war and human tragedy in Gaza. It's crucial for all parties to seek peaceful resolutions and prioritize the safety and well-being of civilians.

I am disappointed that we have not been able to condemn the brutal terrorist attack of Hamas in our Assembly.

Furthermore, let me quote the Secretary General of the United Nations who said: “Even in these worst of times, it is vital to look to the long-term horizon and avoid irreversible action that would embolden extremists and doom any prospects for lasting peace.”

Colleagues,

I would like to turn to the topic of this general debate. SDG16 focuses on the promotion of peace, justice, and strong institutions, and is an important cornerstone within the broader framework of Sustainable Development Goals. The 10 targets of SDG16 contain a wide spectrum, encompassing issues from child protection, the establishment of a robust rule of law, concerns surrounding arms trade, anti-corruption and the cultivation of more resilient institutions alongside the enhancement of participatory decision-making processes.

Firstly, the parliament as institution itself, stands in the very heart of any functioning political system. Effective, accountable, and representative parliaments serve as the fundament of democracy. Parliaments represent the voice of the people, enacting laws, allocating budgets and ensuring governmental accountability.

Robust and efficient parliaments must reflect all parts of society, earning and upholding the public's trust.

Secondly, a robust parliament plays an important role in empowering other vital state-institutions, including executive authorities and the judiciary. Parliamentarians bear the responsibility of providing these authorities with a solid legal foundation and the necessary financial and human resources to fulfill their mandates.

Colleagues,

We are halfway through the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Time is now to review the progress we've achieved, but more importantly where we need to hasten and scale up action. All SDGs are seriously off track. All countries, poorer and richer alike, should use the halfway momentum to self-critically review and revise their national strategies, and commit to strengthening multilateralism. Strong parliaments and strong governmental institutions are key - for progress in all other SDGs too. Parliamentarians play a pivotal role by integrating international standards in national frameworks. Enhancing public trust through governance reforms and integrating civil society in preventive measures is crucial.

I am pleased, that the *Sustainable Development Report 2023* published by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) ranks only 4 of 166 countries better on the way than Austria (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany).

In many areas further steps are necessary in order to maintain our good ranking and to secure the citizens' trust in the rule of law and government institutions.

We know the challenges ahead of us. It is in our hands. Let us use the time left and make the 2030 Agenda a success.

Thank you.