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General Debate

Parliamentary action for social development and justice

by Mr. Averof Neofytou, MP (Cyprus)

Madam President of the IPU,
Dear Colleagues,
Distinguished Guests,

It is a privilege to address you today as a parliamentarian from Cyprus, a country that knows both the fragility and strength of democracy, economic resilience and social cohesion.

The recent announcements by the United States regarding the imposition of tariffs mark a significant shift in global trade dynamics. While every country has the right to defend its economic interests, we must acknowledge the unintended consequences such measures may have, particularly on smaller, export-reliant economies and on global stability at large.

I believe that open markets, fair competition and entrepreneurship can drive prosperity. But I also believe in the responsibility of the state to ensure that this prosperity is inclusive and sustainable. Social development and justice are not abstract ideals; they are the foundation of strong, resilient societies.

In Cyprus, we understand that economic policy is not just about numbers. It is about people. Families facing inflationary pressures. Small businesses dealing with disrupted supply chains. Young people looking for opportunity in an increasingly uncertain world. That is why parliamentary action matters, because it is through parliaments that values are translated into policy.

We, therefore, need to focus on three areas; Through legislation we need to prepare our economies to be resilient to global shocks without overburdening future generations with unsustainable debt. Secondly, we need to provide opportunity, to ensure that even in a more protectionist global climate, we invest in innovation, education and entrepreneurship that empowers citizens to adapt and thrive. And lastly we must strengthen cooperation, through international parliamentary dialogue so that we can advocate for trade frameworks that are not only strategic but fair and mutually beneficial.

Protectionism must not come at the cost of global stability and shared prosperity. Instead, it is our duty to pursue a model of economic development that values responsible leadership, strategic openness and social stability.

But social development is not just about economics. It is also about peace, security and justice. More than half century after the illegal Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974, 37% of our territory remains occupied. This flagrant injustice prevents thousands of Cypriots from returning to their homes and undermines our country's full economic and social potential, that can lead to prosperity and development for all Cypriots. A truly just world must uphold international law and protect the right of sovereign states to exist in peace and security. Sustainable development cannot thrive where fundamental rights and territorial integrity are ignored.

Dear Colleagues,

As parliamentarians we must lead the way. We must ensure that development is not a privilege of the few and powerful, but a shared objective. The path forward must be built on the balance between national interest and global solidarity, between economic liberty and social responsibility.

Thank you for your attention.