

DRAFT ADDRESS
SNEZANA PAUNOVIC
DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
SERBIA

Tashkent, Uzbekistan (5-9 April 2025)

General debate: Parliamentary action for social development and justice

Esteemed colleagues,

Parliamentary action plays a key role in shaping social policies that promote social development and justice. Social development does not refer only to economic progress, but also to advancing social and cultural values, and to reducing poverty, inequality and discrimination.

Serbia's serious approach and commitment to enhancing human rights, social justice and environmental protection is reflected in a series of laws we have adopted over past years to regulate these issues (*Gender Equality Law, Law Preventing Discrimination of Persons with Disability, Social Protection Law, Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, Environmental Protection Law, Law on Public Prosecutor's Office and the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence*). The National Assembly, as a supreme legislative authority in the Republic of Serbia, plays a key role in social development as its activities affect shaping the legal framework regulating many aspects of social life.

Therefore, a parliament as a primary authority in a democracy plays a central role in enhancing democratic principles, shaping the legal system and a society aspiring to reach justice, parity and respect for human rights.

However, many challenges facing the world today may not be tackled individually, which is why parliamentary cooperation is pivotal as it, above all, enables us to exchange opinions and positions and to discuss, in a very straightforward manner, all the issues of our common interest in an attempt to reach general goals and find sustainable solutions.

Although we are witnessing an increasing social progress, the world is still facing disparities in living standards and there is still a huge number of people living on the breadline and often in conditions that are a disgrace to the 21st century.

Fighting against poverty is a global challenge requesting a comprehensive approach, including economic, social, political and educational reforms. Poverty does not recognise borders and it deeply affects all the regions in the world. Therefore,

cooperation and coordination at a global level are pivotal to an effective struggle against poverty. We believe that this issue should be our central focus, and that living wages need to be in the focus of our economic and social development.

Parliamentary action also plays an important role in promoting social inclusion which entails active participation of all members of a society, regardless of their social, economic, ethnic, racial or any other status. By passing laws that protect human rights, enable access to education, employment, healthcare, housing and social services, parliaments contribute to building a more inclusive, just and equitable society.

As a woman, I need to emphasise the significance of a greater participation of women, youth and other marginalised groups, not only in political life but in all spheres of society. What we need to ensure is that everyone's voice is equally heard. Advocating this issue is of an imperative significance for social development and justice, as it is the only way to increase social inclusion.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Accountability and national economic and social development is a part of an agenda of every country's policy.

The new social contract for mankind requires a deep transformation of existing political, economic and social systems to direct them towards long-term sustainability, equality and global cooperation.

The world we would like to see entails a continuous, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent life for all - the world of sustainable development, the world where democratic values and principles are pillars of mankind and a synergy of national and international institutions that guarantee respect for these values and principles. The new social contract for mankind is a vision of global cooperation founded on equality, sustainability, respect for rights and joint responsibility. It underscores that all global issues, including poverty, climate change and conflicts demand a joint response. It is only through global cooperation, respect for human rights, preservation of territorial integrity as a basic principle of international law that is respected without partiality and double standards, and through environmental protection that we can build up a just and sustainable world for future generations.

The delegation of the Republic of Serbia is honoured to have an opportunity to participate in the jubilee 150th Assembly of the IPU, the oldest international parliamentary organisation and the largest platform for a dialogue among parliamentarians. Parliamentary cooperation is a bridge connecting nations, cultures and ideas. Through dialogue, exchange of experience, international respect and examples of good practice, we are certain that as parliamentarians we have capacities,

knowledge and skills to contribute to building a better, more inclusive and just society where every individual will have equal opportunities and equal rights, notably the right to freedom and decent life.

Thank you for your attention.