

General Panel: General Debate on "A World in Turmoil – Parliamentary Cooperation and Multilateralism for Peace, Justice and Prosperity for All"

Distinguished colleagues,

The title of this panel discussion is not particularly noted for its brevity; I shall, however, strive to be concise myself—though the topic is close to my heart and certainly merits a more extensive treatment.

The role of parliament—which may rightfully claim to represent the people—is under pressure. We often like to believe that each parliament operates autonomously and that, through legislation, we are able to steer society responsibly, to the best of our ability.

As presiding officers, we must be deeply concerned by the waning trust in the role and relevance of parliaments. This calls for both introspection and vigilance.

By *introspection*, I mean that we must ask ourselves whether we, as parliamentarians, are honouring our mandate with dignity. That requires commitment to the common good, independence of thought and action, and a profound sense of civic responsibility. We must also dare to embody these values—both in word and in deed. In that sense, we should all be ambassadors of parliamentary democracy. *Noblesse oblige*.

I am convinced there is no lack of zeal when it comes to drafting and adopting legislation. In fact, one could argue that our legislative corpus has become overly extensive. We must focus on laws that truly work—rather than producing rules simply because each new event seems to demand some legislative response. *In der Beschränkung zeigt sich der Meister*.

It is also our duty to hold the executive power to account. In times of crisis—such as those we face today—calls for decisive action are entirely justified. However, this does not reduce the need for checks and balances. On the contrary—it makes them all the more essential.

This oversight function must be exercised in full. Parliaments must not be relegated to the role of mere formal endorsers of executive decisions. If they are, our institutions risk becoming little more than rubber-stamp chambers set within an overly expensive theatre.

We must also remain vigilant against external constraints on parliamentary freedom. Supranational legal norms are undoubtedly important—but they should not excessively curtail the prerogatives of democratic representation. Judges—

whether national or international—should ensure that rules are applied correctly, but they must refrain from reinterpreting laws too expansively in light of current social trends. If they do, we, as representatives of the people, risk being sidelined—and democratically established policies risk being amended or even ignored. That is detrimental to the democratic character of the state structure.

I would like to take this opportunity to propose the following: let us use this forum to dedicate a future session to the role of parliaments in the 21st century as a central theme.

Such a dialogue should culminate in recommendations on shared principles concerning our institutions. Allow me to briefly articulate a few potential objectives:

1. The strengthening of sovereign and legitimate legislation vis-à-vis bodies without a democratic mandate.
2. Effective mechanisms of oversight to counteract technocracy and unaccountable governance.
3. The recognition of parliamentary diplomacy as a full-fledged complement to executive diplomacy.

And what forum could be more fitting than this esteemed assembly, which brings together those who must, above all else, champion the role of parliament as a cornerstone of democratic governance?

I thank you for your attention.