

*Speech of Mr Toomas Kivimägi, First Vice-President of the Riigikogu at the
General Debate „A world in turmoil: Parliamentary cooperation and
multilateralism for peace, justice and prosperity for all“*

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

The greatest threat to democracy today is war in Europe, **Russia's ongoing aggression against Ukraine. Putin's aggressive goals remain unchanged** – he wants all of Ukraine, but not only that. Every one of us must admit that Russia's aim in this war is also to push USA troops out of Europe and create a buffer zone beyond its borders. Ultimately, he seeks to **dismantle** the European security architecture and replace it with spheres of influence. They work 24/7 to divide us. Not only by showing military force but by interfering in elections, sabotaging referendums etc. The outcome of this war is **existential not only** to the whole Europe, but also to the democratic rules-based world.

That's why we – the democratic countries - must stand **united** in defence of democracy, peace, human rights and the rule of law. These fundamental values lie at the heart of our societies and have been the driving force behind our success. It's important to remind that to be united means solidarity, it means putting common values above national and regional interests. Today we are focusing on Ukraine, tomorrow it might be Spain or France or any one of us. We are in the same boat.

Therefore, when we speak about “safeguarding democracy” our priority must be **strengthening Ukraine's position** vis à-vis the aggressor - both in the context of peace negotiations and long-term security. This requires increased military support to Ukraine.

Estonia has committed to allocating **0.25% of its GDP** annually to military aid for Ukraine until 2027, and we encourage other countries to follow suit.

But supporting Ukraine is only part of the task – all democratic countries must also significantly increase their own defence spending. For example, the EU, together with the UK, Norway and other partners, has enormous potential to become militarily much stronger and more autonomous, as our combined GDP is at least ten times larger than Russia's.

We just need to change our mindset. Yes, it means fewer new roads, fewer new stadiums - but it means more security. What happened in Ukraine proves that security must be **the priority number 1** for every democratic country.

In June this year in Hague at NATO Summit allies agreed to invest 5% of GDP in defence. This is a significant commitment in response to increasing threats to our security. Estonia is doing its part – we have committed to raising our defence spending to 5,4% from next year.

At NATO Summit it was also agreed to boost our defence industries – which will not only increase our security but will also create jobs, boost economy.

We have a bright future ahead of us, I'm sure of that. But only if we are unified, solidary and empathic. If we are together, we are invincible!

Peace and prosperous future to the world, to all democratic countries represented in this hall!

Thank you for your attention!