

**Madam
Distinguished colleagues,**

President,

Democracy begins with one simple but decisive question:

Do people trust their institutions?

Do they believe that their voice matters, that their rights are protected, and that the decisions we make improve their lives?

It is an honour to address you on behalf of the National Assembly of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Trust is not created by declarations. It is earned through action — when people see that institutions listen to them, that the law applies equally to everyone, and that political decisions bring real change to their lives.

In the National Assembly of Bulgaria, I represent Vidin — a region in northwestern Bulgaria with a rich history and great potential, but also with long-standing demographic, economic and infrastructure challenges.

This experience has taught me something important: when a region falls behind, people do not lose only jobs, income and opportunities. They gradually lose trust — in institutions, in the political process and, often, in their own future.

That is why good governance means ensuring that national policies reach every community — through access to education, healthcare, transport, digital connectivity and decent work, regardless of where a person was born or lives.

The quality of democracy is also measured by how we protect those whose voices do not always reach institutions easily — women, minorities, people with disabilities and vulnerable communities.

Historical communities must be able to preserve their language, culture and traditions while participating fully in the public life of the states of which they are citizens.

Bessarabian Bulgarians have lived outside Bulgaria's borders for more than two centuries. They want their children to have the opportunity to study the Bulgarian language, history and traditions. Their desire to preserve their identity does not conflict with their civic belonging. Respect for historical communities strengthens trust, social cohesion and democratic resilience.

Women must have genuine access to education, economic independence, political representation and protection from violence and discrimination.

The full participation of people with disabilities is not a matter of charity, but of equality and human dignity.

And these values must become part of what we teach our children — because in raising them, we are shaping the future citizens and decision-makers of our societies.

Parliaments must be a bridge between institutions and communities. Our task is not only to pass laws, but to ensure that they work for people and leave no one outside their protection.

Trust also has an international dimension. It depends on respect for the UN Charter, international law and international humanitarian law. Peace requires dialogue and diplomacy, but also justice, accountability and respect for human life.

Let us build societies in which no person, no community and no region is left without a voice.

Trust is democracy's most valuable capital. But it is not given to us forever.

We must earn it every day through the decisions we make and through the way we serve the people.

Let us be worthy of that trust.

Thank you.
