

GENERAL DEBATE

Enhancing good governance and empowering communities through inclusivity, trust and opportunities for all

President of the Assembly,

Speakers of Parliaments,

Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today. I am glad to be able to address this important and relevant topic. Good governance is something we should practice every day. Empowering communities should be taken for granted, while inclusivity, trust, and opportunities for all should leave no room for doubt. That is how it should be if we lived in perfect societies. Unfortunately, we do not. That is why we are here to share our experience and engage in discussion – to draw attention, to encourage, and, if necessary, to express concern or condemn.

Good governance begins with our duty as members of parliament – to exercise effective parliamentary control. Last year, the Seimas examined more than 1,200 issues related to parliamentary control. To strengthen parliamentary control and increase transparency for the public, opportunities have been provided for anyone interested to analyze relevant data directly on the Seimas website.

Good governance is also inseparable from transparency and openness to the public. We are pleased that the people of Lithuania can follow the legislative process at every stage, as all lawmaking in the Seimas is open and easily accessible to everyone. Information on the progress of every draft law, from its introduction to the final vote, is published on the Seimas website.

Additionally, citizens can directly influence the draft laws under consideration. A public consultation period is announced each time, giving citizens the opportunity to submit their proposals on the draft legislation being considered by the Seimas.

Last but not least, the Seimas publishes information tailored to people with visual impairments, in sign language and in plain language, thereby ensuring that no one is excluded from the legislative process.

To engage communities and build their trust, the openness of the parliament as an institution is just as important as transparency in the legislative process. In 2025, nearly 28,000 people visited the Seimas, with almost 1,000 guided tours and educational sessions organized. The Seimas is actively reaching out to children and young people through interactive games, educational activities, and meetings with parliamentarians. I believe that engaging children and educating youth about our country's democratic processes is the most direct path toward a strong, inclusive community for the future.

State financial management and the responsible use of resources are also integral parts of good governance. Today, most parliaments around the world are in the middle of budget discussions for next year. We would all love to pass a budget that supports good governance, strengthens our communities, builds trust, and creates opportunities for everyone. But unfortunately, many of us cannot deliver that ideal scenario right now. First and foremost, we have to protect our people. Lithuania is not far from Ukraine, where Russia's unprovoked war continues to rage. We hear the impact of this war in the stories of Ukrainian refugees living in Lithuania, and we see it in their eyes. That is why, like so many other nations, our main budget priority has to be defense and security.

That is why, first and foremost, we must say no to aggression and violence against other states. It is the duty of us all to condemn an aggressor that trades good governance and community engagement for military build-up at home, forcing neighboring countries to do the same.

Tomorrow we will debate on protecting civilians and critical civilian infrastructure in armed conflicts. Is it acceptable to bomb nurseries, schools, hospitals, homes, and shops? Is it acceptable to destroy another country's energy infrastructure? It is the most vulnerable who suffer most – the children, the elderly, and women left in the cold. Every single day in Ukraine, dozens of civilians are killed simply for being in their own homes. Each of us must ask ourselves: is this acceptable to us, or are we simply putting up with it?

Dear Colleagues, we are living in an extraordinary era – a time when science and technology offer unlimited opportunities to establish good governance in our countries by empowering communities through inclusivity, trust, and opportunities for all. Yet at the same time, these opportunities are being stripped away from us by open aggression against neighboring states and hybrid attacks on our own countries. We must not allow this to become the new normal. The aggressor must be held accountable, because every resident of every nation across the globe has the right to good governance.

Thank you.