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Closing of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

8 September 2021

Distinguished Speakers and Members of Parliament,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Congratulations to IPU, to the Austrian Parliament, and to all of you on a successful conference.

The 5th World Conference has brought together parliamentarians from around the world at a pivotal moment, to share the hard lessons learned in the COVID-19 crisis, to overcome the continued challenges posed by the pandemic, and to chart a collective and inclusive way forward in the recovery at a time people are divided, the planet is fragile and peace is elusive.

I welcome the commitments contained in the High-Level Declaration adopted just now, and I commend you for amplifying the voices, aspirations, and concerns of the people you represent and serve.

I also thank you for bringing a sobering voice from Afghanistan.

The UN Office at Vienna and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime are proud to support you, and to be your partner in your endeavours.

I had the honour of addressing the opening of the 13th Summit of Women Speakers on Monday. I experienced the refreshing energy and determination that women parliamentarians are bringing to the table, and witnessed the firm commitment of the IPU to ensuring the full contributions of women and men to parliamentary work everywhere.

This commitment is also in evidence here, and I was glad to see that the first panel of this Conference focused on a new global social compact for gender equality, which represents an essential precondition, a necessary means to an end, and a specific goal under the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

This Conference has served as an opportunity for the parliamentary community to address the impact of the pandemic on our systems and societies. It has further sought to ensure that our economic recovery also contributes to sustainable development, and that the COVID-19 crisis does not overshadow the urgency of climate action.

Your discussions have also contended with the important questions of how parliaments can strike a balance between transparency and security, and how the parliamentary community can further advance global governance going forward.

In this regard, I welcome the focus of the final panel of the 5th World Conference on the “unfinished agenda”, and the untapped opportunities for parliamentarians and the UN to work together, driven by new ideas and approaches.

I value the close partnership between UNODC and the IPU, and I strongly believe UNODC has more to offer parliamentarians and their regional networks, to support action to address the challenges identified by this Conference and the commitments outlined in the High-Level Declaration.

Together with the IPU and the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism, we are developing model legislative provisions to better support victims of terrorism.

I commend the IPU for their focus on this area, and I am proud to co-organize the first-ever Global Parliamentary Summit on Terrorism. I am looking forward to the opening of this important meeting tomorrow.

UNODC is a leading provider of technical and legislative assistance to prevent and combat terrorism, with a focus on criminal justice responses. Since 2002, UNODC has trained over 32,000 criminal justice officials, and supported the drafting, revision, and adoption of 189 pieces of counter-terrorism legislation.

Our counter-terrorism expertise is connected with our uniquely integrated mandates on drugs, transnational organized crime, and corruption; our role as guardian of key international treaties addressing these challenges; and our support for the UN standards and norms on crime prevention and criminal justice.

Now the COVID crisis and economic fallout have increased vulnerabilities and intensified the threats posed by drugs, crime, corruption, and terrorism. Last year, there were up to 124 million “new poor”, which represents the first rise in extreme poverty in a generation.

Without school, job prospects or social protection, many millions more women, children and men have been left more vulnerable and more exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and other crimes.

To strengthen prevention and protection, provide opportunity, and empower people, in particular women and youth, we need parliaments to pass national legislation, in line with international commitments and enabling international cooperation.

We need effective implementation and enforcement, to ensure that the laws on the books result in successful action on the ground.

And we need parliaments to engage with civil society, as well as promote accountability and address corruption, including by harnessing digital technologies, and working towards closing the digital divide.

To support these efforts, UNODC and IPU are formally exploring a new and comprehensive collaboration framework to provide integrated normative assistance, across a broad range of rule of law challenges, including by raising the awareness of parliamentarians, and by helping to identify gaps, develop legislation, and promote international and regional cooperation.

We are also discussing expanded collaboration with regional parliamentary assemblies with the same goals in mind.

Honourable Speakers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

For myself, this week with you has been a welcome and invigorating opportunity to see multilateralism in action, and in person, after months of living in the virtual mode of work.

The week has also served as welcome evidence that the parliamentary community is thriving despite the many restrictions and challenges over the past months that have sought to hinder your cooperation, and that all of you remain faithful and engaged in a greater global solidarity for peace and sustainable development, for people and planet.

UNODC is pleased to join you, and support you.

Thank you, congratulations once again on a successful World Conference, and see you tomorrow at the First Global Parliamentary Summit on Terrorism.