

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
141st Assembly, Belgrade - Serbia, 13 – 17 October 2019
General Debate on the theme
**" Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and
mechanisms, and the contribution of regional cooperation "**
by H.E. Mr. Demetris Syllouris,
President of the House of Representatives (Cyprus)

Dear Madam President,

Dear Colleagues,

Firstly, allow me to congratulate the National Assembly of Serbia for the excellent organization of our Assembly and to express my thanks for the generous hospitality.

International law is the cornerstone on which every country of the world should base its relations with others in order to safeguard peace and prosperity at national and international level. In an interdependent and globalized world, a comprehensive framework of legally-binding global commitments should guide us all towards peace and security and should be applied by all countries, rich and poor, big and small, based on solidarity, accountability and shared responsibility.

Time after time during IPU Assemblies, we have affirmed our commitment to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law, in other words, to an international order based on the rule of law. Time after time, we have reiterated our perseverance for the application of international treaties and covenants, such as the International Covenants and Conventions on human rights, the Treaty on the International Law of the Sea, the Development Agenda 2030 and many more. And we do so, because we all agree that the future of peace and prosperity around the world depends on strengthening international law through cooperation between nations.

Regional cooperation can be, therefore, of great value in addressing regional and ultimately global challenges. Regional cooperation refers to an inclusive partnership based on a shared vision of peaceful coexistence and good neighbourly relations, principles of international law, mutual respect and cooperation for the wellbeing of the peoples of the region at stake.

In the context of such institutionalized cooperation, national Parliaments, as the key players in ensuring the wellbeing of citizens and preserving the rule of law at the national and international levels, could play a pivotal role through joint initiatives, actions and synergies. A Parliament's role is instrumental in today's efforts to foster peace, stability, prosperity and effective application of international law. The Parliaments' guidance and initiatives must constitute the trailhead of regional and international cooperation.

Through parliamentary diplomacy and networking, we can further promote existing cooperations, enhance established relations with other Legislatures and parliamentary organisations or create new ones, to examine common challenges and issues of concern, through the exchange of visits, knowledge and expertise, the formation of friendship groups and interacting of parliamentary staff. In this context of regional cooperation and in the framework of parliamentary diplomacy, the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus has already activated three Trilateral Summits, one with the Parliaments of Greece and Israel, one with the Parliaments of Greece and Egypt and one with the Parliaments of Greece and Jordan. Similar trilateral formations are being promoted between the House and the Hellenic Parliament on one hand and the Parliaments of Lebanon and Armenia on the other, on the lines of initiatives taken at governmental level.

Dear Colleagues,

There is no doubt that violations of international law constitute the heaviest blow to our joint efforts to safeguard peace and security in our world. In the case of Cyprus, if the rule of international law had not been violated by Turkey and if pertinent UN Security Council Resolutions were upheld, the Cyprus problem would not have persisted for so long. On the contrary, the occupation power's repeated provocative actions within Cyprus' Exclusive Economic Zone, including threats of military action, constitute not only violations of the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus, but also of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982), the provisions of which are an integral part of the European legal order. These violations are also a threat to peace and stability in the wider region.

In summing up, I wish to underline my belief that the realistic vision of strengthening international law requires comprehensive political will at national, regional and international level, especially on behalf of the Parliaments, which are essential in creating the conditions for generating the necessary political will.

At the same time, the role of regional and international parliamentary assemblies is fundamental in the context of cooperation between countries of a specific region, bearing in mind the need for mutually reinforcing initiatives beyond the national level and the largest possible promotion of cooperation and dialogue in the efforts to strengthen international law. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has a very significant role to play in this regard. Especially because of its work in establishing political dialogue, upholding the rule of law and promoting the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

I am convinced that exhibiting strong political will and determination to foster regional cooperation can lead to tangible progress and advances that will ultimately benefit the international legal order and that will better respond to the growing everyday needs and aspirations of our citizens.

Thank you!

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2 October 2019