

Speech at the 141th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly

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Mr. President,

I thank the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Serbia, the host, for their leadership and hospitality in convening the 141st IPU Assembly.

I wish to commend you for choosing the topic of the current Assembly so wisely. Respecting and strengthening the international rules based order must be of highest importance, not only for my Parliament, but for all democracies around the world. The fact that Liechtenstein has preserved its autonomy over the past 300 years is the result of far-sighted diplomacy relying on long-standing partnerships. For roughly 150 years, Liechtenstein has not enjoyed any military protection. According to that, Liechtenstein is dependent on the validity and observance of the international legal order.

Yet today, we have every reason to be concerned: The trend away from multilateralism and the endangered consensus on the international legal order represent worrisome developments. In light of these developments in European and world politics, I am grateful that my Parliament and the Government of Liechtenstein recently entered into a public debate on the country's foreign policy priorities and objectives. This debate clearly showed that the Liechtenstein Parliament supports the foreign policy priorities, particularly Liechtenstein's strong voice for Multilateralism. I can highly recommend such debates. They are indeed of highest importance and should take place on a regular basis.

Mr. President, dear colleagues,

The United Nations Charter is the strongest expression of the rule of law at the international level and the adoption of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights is one of the proudest achievements in the history of multilateral norm setting. Yet, many of these basic objectives are violated routinely and sometimes systematically around the globe.

These challenges have even become more pronounced, both due to political attacks on institutions such as the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the overall trend to undermine the rule of law at the international level.

The ICC has been given a very positive response from States from all regions of the world. But, more than one third of the UN members have not joined the Rome Statute and their populations therefore do not benefit from the legal protection offered by the ICC. Therefore, Parliamentarians should much more often speak up in favour of the ICC and its important role in preventing horrible crimes.

In the case of the atrocities committed in Syria, the Security Council failed to implement the Charter's vision. I am proud that Liechtenstein took the issue up in the General Assembly and spearheaded the effort that led to the creation of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism [IIIM – "Tripple-I-M"] for crimes committed in Syria since March 2011. The IIIM has quickly gained strong political acceptance in all regions of the world. It has also established itself as an important accountability model for situations where other options are not available. The strongest expression thereof is the Human Rights Council's establishment of an IIIM-type accountability mechanism for Myanmar in 2018. This illustrates that the IIIM works and shows Liechtenstein's productive role in the international community.

Mr. President, dear colleagues,

One of the key functions of the Liechtenstein Parliament is its authority over the national budget. An essential part of the national budget – CHF 22.6 Million – pertains to Liechtenstein's International Humanitarian Cooperation and Development. This is our primary foreign policy instrument with which we make a substantial contribution to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is commendable that the Government of Liechtenstein presented in July 2019 its first Voluntary National Review on the implementation of the SDGs. And, it is recommendable that the Liechtenstein delegation consisted not only of government officials but also of civil society representatives as well as Liechtenstein's first ever Youth Delegate.

The fight against modern slavery and human trafficking is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Modern slavery and human trafficking belong to one of the three most profitable illegal business models. Today 40 million men, women and children are enslaved and forced labour alone generates 150 billion USD in illegal funds per year. Where money is made, money is transferred and invested. And therefore, financial institutions are involved.

The real interest of Liechtenstein's financial sector to combat these international crimes has led to the launch of the "Liechtenstein Initiative" one year ago. This initiative - shaped as a private-public partnership - is a showcase for what can be achieved when the public and private sector work together. The Government of Liechtenstein, together with its national partners as well as Australia and the Netherlands, presented this September during the high-level week of the General Assembly in New York the initiative's product. The so called "Blueprint for Finance Against Slavery and Trafficking" puts the financial sector at the heart of the fight against these disgusting crimes. The presentation is followed by a multi-stakeholder dissemination and implementation phase. In this regard, Parliaments can also be platforms in helping to combat modern slavery and human trafficking.

Mr. President,

Let me once again commend the IPU for choosing today's topic. Respecting and strengthening the international rules based order should be amongst the top priorities of our democratic mandates. In doing so, we should always put people first and strongly advocate for initiatives that strengthen the legal order, on national and international levels.