

**Address of Mr Gundars Daudze,
Head of the Latvian National Group to IPU,
MP of the Saeima (Parliament of the Republic of Latvia)
at the General Debate on**

”Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and mechanisms, and the contribution of regional cooperation ”

6 min., Belgrade, October, 2019.

Mr. President,

Dear Colleagues!

Strengthening the rule of law and regional cooperation are things of utmost importance for our societies, and we - Parliamentarians are sensors that can transform and deliver our society’s concerns into relevant legislative acts.

The word ”parliament” has originated from the French word ”parole”, which means ”to speak”. And main mission of parliamentarians is to communicate. To speak about important issues of state - on regional and world scale significance. Our privilege is to be able to speak and to be heard loudly, and sometimes about the issues that cannot be discussed by other state officials. Therefore, I truly believe that Inter Parliamentary organisations, especially the Inter Parliamentary Union is a great platform for discussions, sharing experiences and the best practices.

Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania – the three Baltic sisters – have been committed to the regional cooperation for almost thirty years. And we perform it through the Baltic Assembly - a strong regional interparliamentary organisation.

This year we jointly celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Baltic Way. The 23rd August of 1989 is a significant historical event and a part of our collective memory. By celebrating it we praise the people of our countries who joined their hands to form a human chain that linked Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius, to fight peacefully and democratically for the independence of our countries. And we won. The world recognized the independence of the Baltic States.

Today, the Baltic States are democratic, secure and prosperous member states of the European Union, NATO and numerous interparliamentary organisations. But we still remember our lessons learned long time ago and are confident that we can accomplish more while standing together.

Today we discuss regional and global problems, foster security, welfare, development and improve people-to-people contacts. We jointly work with our partners in Nordic Council, Benelux Parliament, Visegrad countries, GUAM Parliamentary Assembly, Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, Parliamentary Assembly of Black Sea Economic Cooperation. We provide our support to EU Eastern Partnership countries.

But the work of parliamentarians is not only to speak, it equally includes delivering of practical results for the welfare of the people.

The Baltic States implement practical projects through mutual understanding and cooperation. We work together in numerous areas – like border protection, fight against organised crime, infrastructure building, common procurement of medicines, coordination of our joint positions within the EU.

I am proud that this year Latvia is the Presiding country in the Baltic Assembly and the Baltic Council of Ministers. Motto of the Latvian Presidency “Achieving more Together” certifies the regional commitment and unanimity. The motto was grounded on three main priorities:

- First, comprehensive approach to security and defence;
- Second, strengthening the field of energy, transport and infrastructure;
- Third, developing a region of growth and competitiveness.

Bearing in mind our “Baltic” experience we are confident that geographical distance is not an obstacle to be close in our efforts and aims and at the end to reach our common goals.

Latvian Parliament understands that all the efforts mentioned above will be useless if we will not be able to focus on youth policy issues. We believe that this part of society will build a sustainable future and will adopt fair laws at both - regional and global level.

Therefore I would like to share with you some latest examples of our parliament's good practices.

First one. Under parliamentary patronage the Education, Culture and Science Committee hosted a workshop on youth policy development "Where we are and where we go". The aim was:

- to evaluate the achievements in the field of youth policy and to judge the necessary changes in the normative acts in order to promote the development of youth policy in Latvia,
- to listen to the views of young people themselves and those involved in youth policy, including youth organizations, municipal youth affairs professionals, local youth workers, youth international program agencies, NGO sector researchers,
- to present the Latvian section of the results of the study "Youth welfare in the Baltic States".

The second example is about Youth Parliament. For the ninth year the Saeima has been organizing the Youth Parliament or so called Youth Saeima, which gives the opportunity to young people to express and defend their ideas, as well as to get to know the everyday life of the MPs.

100 young people, whose ideas received the largest number of electronic votes, are elected to the Youth Parliament which functions much like the real Parliament. On concluding the young people who were particularly active in sectoral committees and in discussions on the draft declarations of the Youth Parliament were awarded the title of Future Politician.

And hopefully young Future Politicians will be the ones who will understand that regional cooperation is important, putting the emphasis on partnership rather than rivalry.

I am sure that we all share similar vision - parliaments have a great role in ensuring peace and security, stability and democracy, effective governance and rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We need to remember that the answer to a single state challenges often can be found in a regional approach, when neighbours and friends stands hand in hand with you.

Thank you!