

final version of Ms. KEFALOGIANNI'S speech - Greek delegation.
Changes are marked in yellow.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Hellenic Parliamentary Delegation, please allow me to welcome all member countries of the Organization to this General Assembly.

The Hellenic Parliament, which is one of the oldest members of IPU, is actively involved in any effort to consolidate representative institutions.

In Greece, the strong institutional role of the Parliament in shaping the country's positions in the international environment, is enshrined in both the Constitution and the Parliament's Rules of Procedure.

The constitutional provision of these powers, rests on the idea that the broadness of the role of parliaments, functions as an indicator of the quality of democracy in a liberal rule of law.

Especially in recent years, facing major, global rearrangements, but also new challenges the Hellenic Parliament has taken important initiatives.

We aim at keeping foreign Parliaments and International Parliamentary Organizations constantly informed of our country's positions on international issues, as well as on our national issues.

Today, one such critical issue is the **management of the extremely complicated migration and refugee issue in the Mediterranean.**

It is a particularly complicated issue that forms a challenge for every country in the region, however it underlines the urgent need for strict adherence to International Law, for its further processing, full application and possibly for its empowerment.

And I'm referring to the full range of its sources...

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From the Geneva Convention in 1951 and the 1967 Protocol, to the International Human Rights Law, but also the binding decisions of the UN Security Council.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Since 2015, when the refugee crisis erupted, the EU has been asked to tackle the phenomenon with respect to international norms and values as well as in maintaining cohesion and solidarity between its member states.

Greece has mainly shifted the burden of this situation as a host country.

In the effort to manage the migration flows from third countries to its Member States and to strengthen the legal entry channels, the EU has formulated the European Action Program.

Turkey, which is the basic transit country for refugees before entering European territory, has been a crucial interlocutor for the EU.

The EU-Turkey co-operation on migration was formally outlined in the November 2015 Joint Action Plan on Migration and in the EU-Turkey Joint Declaration announced in March 2016.

In doing so, Europe and Turkey have agreed to jointly cooperate in order to minimize irregular migration from Turkey to the EU.

At the same time, their commitment to reintroduce the accession process, as set out in their joint statement in November 2015, was reaffirmed.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Both the aforementioned commitments as well as the faithful application of international law to search and rescue, asylum and immigration policies,

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Should be the essential guide in managing immigration and its closely linked but nevertheless distinct refugee issues.

At the same time, it is necessary to distinguish between an economic migrant and a refugee who is assessed as entitled to asylum. Necessary both in terms of institutions and values of our legal culture and due to the practical consequences of having a completely uncontrolled and unconstitutional acceptance of all forms of immigration, regardless of the needs, particularities and boundaries of hostcountries' political, social and economic systems.

In this complex and sensitive context, we expect Turkey to be the neighbor that respects the Agreements and international law - included the International Law of the Sea. Which, also binds Turkey with regard to the Cyprus EEZ...

On the other hand, all European countries must act in accordance with its principles and values, on two levels.

With regard to the detailed and complete observance of international regulatory obligations concerning refugees. As well as, in relation to the internal one, within the Union, a balanced implementation of policies of solidarity, mutual trust and fair sharing of responsibilities of its member states.

Unfortunately, at the moment, Europe and Greece - as the first Host State - are experiencing a rapid rise in new migration flows. It is a situation that, if not controlled by joint decisions and agreements, will undo the great efforts that have been made to the direction of common treatment and understanding. And it will ruin any political and social consensus, often sensitive, in the countries of South and Southeast Europe and in Europe as a whole.

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As it has developed, the migration problem is certainly an important and common European issue. But above all, it is a complex geopolitical and humanitarian issue.

The contribution of international co-operation to the full implementation of International Law is, in a sense, essentially a way of strengthening it.

Finally, please allow me to underline that Greece is in full correspondence with the EU positions.

Greece strongly condemns Turkey's new one-sided military motion on Syria's sovereign territory, undermining in this manner the stability of the region and creating possible humanitarian consequences.

Thank you