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Speaking Points, 141st IPU Assembly (Belgrade, 13 to 17 October 2019)

Dr Vladimir Orlić, Head of Delegation

Assembly – General Debate on the theme *Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and mechanisms* (7 minutes)

Dear President, Ms Cuevas Barron,
Dear Secretary General, Mr Chungong,
Dear Mr/Madam Chairperson,
Dear Messrs and Mesdames Speakers,
Dear colleagues,

It is clear that the role of parliaments has become internationalised, and parliaments can be considered to be active players on the global stage.

Apart from ratifying international treaties and so enshrining confirmed international agreements and generally accepted rules of international law into the legal order of a state, as is the case in the Republic of Serbia, our parliament also actively participates in the activities of numerous international parliamentary organisations and regional initiatives and processes.

Global and regional peace and co-operation, adherence to the rule of law, and respect for international law, are the cornerstones of both domestic and foreign policy of the Republic of Serbia. Even though Serbia has, in the recent past, been the victim of flagrant breaches of international law and its standards and principles, with its sovereignty and territorial integrity infringed upon, and regardless of the many difficulties it faces today due to unilateral moves made by Priština, Serbia has never renounced these principles but has rather consistently endeavoured to champion them.

The example of Kosovo and Metohija is the best evidence for the importance of international law and the consequences that can arise if it is not upheld. The series of unilateral measures taken by Priština that run counter to the principles of international co-operation and international law – such as the introduction of the uncivilised 100% tariff on goods originating in central Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, adoption of the so-called ‘Platform for Political Dialogue with Belgrade’, failure to comply with the Brussels Agreement, attempts to

establish an armed force contrary to UN Security Council Resolution 1244, abuse of cultural heritage, restrictions on the freedom of movement of officials and members of the public, threats, and physical assaults – all clearly indicate that what is at stake is not the fate of a territory, but the fate of people, both Serbs and Albanians, who are equally affected by these actions. This matter is not only about the right to enjoy respect for one's identity, language, and culture: it concerns first and foremost the right to life, and here no arguments to the contrary are available in international law. Nonetheless, Serbia stands ready to resume dialogue as soon as the tariffs are lifted and to continue its peaceful efforts, in line with international legal principles, to resolve the issue of Kosovo and Metohija, which is of tremendous importance for regional stability.

Strengthening regional co-operation and stability is not only significant for safeguarding the prospect of membership in the EU, but is also a precondition for both economic growth and overall progress in the Western Balkans.

In today's ever-changing world, with our attention focused on attempts to predict the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, including its effects on national and international security, the importance of respect for international law is clear. This presents us with an unambiguous requirement: to increase our involvement in international politics and follow events on the global stage. The role of parliaments in this regard should and must be strengthened, by means of direct engagement within political systems, and through international organisations, primarily the IPU and its institutes and mechanisms of action.

Respect for international law and promotion of regional co-operation, the key topics of this meeting, are a strategic goal of supreme importance for the Republic of Serbia. As such, and in response to the question of how we see the role of parliaments in strengthening international law, Serbia and its National Assembly will continue to work selflessly for, and remain committed to, the attainment of the goals of the IPU and the discharge of its duties, including at this meeting.

I thank you for your attention.