

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

Belgrade, 13 October 2019

Distinguished President Baron,
Distinguished presidents and parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased that today we have gathered in such a large number, here in Belgrade, at the 141st Assembly of the Interparliamentary Union, to jointly support the work of parliaments, their role at the domestic and global political scene and contribute to mutual understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

Even 56 years ago, the SFRY hosted the 52nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in this city. It was a country that in the 1980s represented one of the most successful countries in Europe, recognised in the world for its ethnic, religious, cultural harmony and strong economic development.

I am mentioning this in order to emphasise that we politicians need to be aware that the decisions that we are making today are very much creating the future for the next generations. If the then leaders of the SFRY had had will for mutual dialogue and agreement, the terrible events of the 1990s would have been avoided and for the world this region wouldn't be as an association for war, conflict, hatred, intolerance. Despite the expressed political will, relations between our countries still feel consequences of these events.

We in Montenegro are convinced that the direction that we have been following for the last 13 years, since the renewal of our independence, is based precisely on the values of solidarity, dialogue, and respect for diversities – which are the greatest value of a civic, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Montenegro. All of this made us recognised today as a state that fosters good relations, supports its neighbours and pursues a responsible domestic and foreign policy aligned with that of the European Union.

Through regular parliamentary work and intensive communication with citizens, the Parliament of Montenegro is actively participating in strengthening democratic processes and creating a better political and socio-economic environment. In recent years, we have been assessed as the most open Parliament in the region, which has been contributed by our continuous communication with citizens, the media, civil society and international partners.

Recognising the need for establishing dialogue and cooperation in the region, already in 2004, the Parliament of Montenegro established the Cetinje Parliamentary Forum. It was one of the first regional parliamentary initiatives in the Western Balkans. Ten days ago, we had the 21st meeting of this initiative, where MPs, together with representatives of international and non-governmental organisations and the media, discussed the role of parliament in a democratic society and better visibility of its work.

By strengthening the role of parliament we strengthen the voice and will of our citizens in international relations. As an elected body, representing all structures of society, it has the

unique responsibility to reconcile the interests and expectations of different groups through dialogue and compromise. It has the task of adapting laws to the needs of society in the new circumstances, to control the actions of governments and international organisations, contributing thus to solving challenges at the international scene.

Conversations of MPs at gatherings such as this one prove that challenges that we are facing are no longer just national, but increasingly regional or international. That is why we should not underestimate the opportunity to find answers together through an open and constructive dialogue, taking care to preserve the cultural and traditional characteristics of our countries.

There will always be differences between partner countries. The challenges they face will not always be the same. However, strong institutions based on the rule of law, procedures, respect for human rights, dialogue, peaceful settlement of disputes, good communication and cooperation in dealing with regional and global challenges can only do well for each of our countries.

That is why today we have an obligation to support one another and strive to be united by good intentions and a desire for a safe and prosperous life for our citizens. Montenegro knows that membership of all South-east European countries is a certain way to achieve the social, economic and political goals that our citizens want and deserve. I believe that we are all aware of the responsibility of making sustainable decisions, necessary for stability, prosperity and stronger cooperation.

At the end, I want to thank the Speaker Maja Gojković for the excellent organisation and hospitality.

Thank you.