

**Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament  
Virtual meeting, 19 and 20 August 2020**

***Parliamentary leadership for a more effective multilateralism that delivers  
peace and sustainable development for the people and planet***

**STATEMENT  
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The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic was a real wake-up call for both the multilateral international order and our countries.

The capacity of our health systems, the resilience of our economies, the patience and understanding of our citizens have been put to a serious test.

For parliaments too this pandemic has been a litmus test in terms of effective response to challenges that went beyond the sanitary and economic impact of the crisis, touching on the social and democratic fabric of our societies.

The Senate of Romania responded promptly by adapting its agenda and the modalities of performing its legislative and oversight duties. The Standing Orders were amended to allow remote sessions, and it took only one week for all our internal bodies to be able to fully carry out their activities remotely.

There was no dilemma in choosing between a lockdown to keep people safe and keeping the economy going. We put people and their health first.

Throughout the state of emergency period, followed by successive states of alert, we adopted legislation to protect the most vulnerable social categories, with a particular focus on support at community level, digital access to education, fiscal facilities, measures against domestic violence, to name but a few.

Equally important, we have struggled to keep the right balance between the need to protect the people's health and safety and the need to preserve the rule of law and the fundamental rights.

During these difficult times, our institution succeeded to fulfill its constitutional mission and the duties it has towards the Romanian people.

The IPU has been instrumental in helping parliaments to perform their tasks in this “everything is different now” context.

And today the IPU gives us the opportunity to contribute to a global parliamentary perspective on the future of multilateralism.

This initiative is most timely.

These global challenges with no borders can only be addressed by collective solutions as no country can deal with them on its own. We must stand united as much as possible in multilateral fora, including through enhanced inter-parliamentary cooperation.

This year we celebrate 75 years since the creation of UN and 65 years since Romania joined the organization. This double anniversary is an occasion for us to reiterate our support for an effective multilateral cooperation based on the principles of the UN Charter.

My country’s commitment to multilateralism and the rules-based international order remains as strong as ever.

Undoubtedly, the current multilateral system is not perfect. It has not always been proactive and has often failed to deliver effective, equitable solutions to the countless challenges we face.

But we should not forget that multilateralism means sharing international responsibilities. It cannot perform without genuine solidarity, whether we address health, migration, climate change, democracy, human rights, or peace and security.

The current pandemic whose end is far from sight calls for an unprecedented level of coherent global action. Otherwise the consequences will be unimaginable and no country will be spared.

Our answer must be firmly rooted in the 2030 Agenda, and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals should guide our recovery efforts. This is the only way to overcome the social, economic and humanitarian crisis that lies before us.

Hence, the urgent need to adjust the existing strategies and roadmaps for the achievement of the SDGs to the “new normal”, to the pandemic and post-pandemic national and international realities.

This is not an easy task, but it is a task for parliaments.

For parliaments that are strong.

For parliaments committed to act as guardians of human rights and the rule of law, as drivers of economic and social progress that leaves no one behind, and as legitimate key partners in international dialogue and cooperation.

The challenges of building back better are as many opportunities, and parliaments must address them as such:

- an opportunity to ensure an economic recovery that is green, is digital, is inclusive and gender balanced;
- an opportunity to uphold and protect human rights against all threats, both old and new;
- an opportunity to improve our health and education policies and infrastructures, while integrating IT&C as their key enabler;
- an opportunity to enhance institutional communication in order to combat misinformation and its potential risk to democracy;
- an opportunity to rethink the scope and forms of parliamentary diplomacy, and take full advantage of modern technologies to exchange experience and support coordination between countries;
- and, of course, the opportunity to reenergize multilateralism, and reassert its role as driving force of the progress of humanity.

We have often heard lately that we should “never let a good crisis go to waste”.

My conviction is that we will not waste this one if parliaments genuinely embrace the spirit of the Declaration of the 2020 World Speakers’ Conference.

We are optimistic enough to believe in a better future for humankind.

We are realistic enough to acknowledge that global progress requires a renewed multilateralism, a reformed UN system, accountable and more effective global institutions, international and regional organizations working in partnership with parliaments, local authorities, business community, academia, the civil society and other stakeholders.

We are pragmatic enough to know that strengthening multilateralism and building public support for it need a robust parliamentary engagement.

The Senate of Romania remains fully committed to working together with parliaments worldwide and the IPU to achieve these goals.