

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Vladimir Andreichenko
Chairman of the House of Representatives of the
National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus**

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

Dear Madam President,

Dear colleagues and friends,

First of all, let me thank the IPU leadership and the organizers of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament for the fact that despite all the difficulties caused by the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, we managed to find an appropriate format for communication.

Of course, in other times it would have been possible to wait and postpone this event, which is undoubtedly significant for the entire parliamentary community, to a more favorable time in terms of health and epidemiology.

However, our response to the situation in the world, especially in the year of the 75th anniversary of the UN, cannot wait. The ever-increasing degree of threats to global security along with the lack of readiness of the main geopolitical poles of power for a constructive and systematic dialogue challenge parliamentarians to take immediate, coordinated and decisive actions and actively involve the tools of parliamentary diplomacy in solving key problems of our time.

The pandemic has clearly demonstrated and accelerated the negative trends in global development that were already discussed, particularly five years ago in New York at the UN Summit of heads of state and government, which adopted the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

Today, it is absolutely clear that the crisis of multilateralism is gaining momentum. The lack of trust that prevails in international relations questions the effectiveness of inter-state dialogue. International security mechanisms are being degraded and the entire system of checks and balances is challenged.

We are witnessing the ease with which the provisions of the Treaty on the Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles and the Open Skies Treaty are being forgotten. The situation with the non-extension of the Strategic

Arms Reduction Treaty, which expires at the beginning of next year, does not add to optimism.

But peace and security is exactly what our voters expect from us in the first place!

The lack of a systematic dialogue to address the key challenges of our time has a negative impact on the implementation of sustainable development plans and improving the quality of life of the peoples of our countries.

Recently, we have to observe how the policy of national protectionism, sanctions, and trade wars is gaining strength. Moreover, the latter are becoming more systematic, large-scale and destructive in the context of a pandemic.

As a result, the world is facing an increase in unemployment and an unprecedented economy decline. According to the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the pandemic has left 1.6 billion people without jobs and livelihoods, and the world economy has already lost \$ 8.5 trillion which is the largest decline since the great depression in the thirties of the last century. The figures of the World Bank, which forecasts a more than 5 percent reduction in global GDP for 2020, are not comforting either.

The difficult situation in the economy and the decline in the level of social protection of the population cause social instability which often turns into mass unrest and riots.

Despite the efforts, the environmental situation remains a serious challenge. The fires that have engulfed all the continents of our planet, especially in the United States and Russia in 2018 and 2019, is a clear result of climate change. The whole planet was worried about the fate of Australia's animal world, which was dying in fires. Currently, 90 per cent of natural disasters are classified as weather and climate-related, and the damage they cause to the world economy is estimated at \$ 520 billion a year, leaving 26 million people in poverty.

All of the above clearly does not contribute to the achievement of the ambitious and noble goals set out in the Sustainable Development Agenda, and at the same time increases our responsibility, the responsibility of every parliamentarian for the situation in the world.

Parliamentary diplomacy should be aimed at resolving global problems and finding mutually acceptable compromises on a wide range of issues. We need

to focus as much as possible on the uniting agenda and long-term and effective cooperation.

Belarusian parliamentarians are ready to support any initiatives that contribute to the goals and objectives of the Agenda 2030, which are complex and indivisible.

Only by joining efforts, showing restraint, wisdom and solidarity we can face the challenges of the XXI century. This is how humanity managed to win the Great Victory over fascism 75 years ago.

Back in 1945, the United Nations Organization was founded. Its establishment demonstrated a spirit of unity, political will to maintain peace, and willingness to jointly resist destructive wars. Belarus, as one of the founding countries of the UN, is true to the ideals that brought the organization to life.

The UN Charter is a fundamental document of international relations. The preservation of the principles enshrined in it is of exceptional importance for Belarus. Only through their full and faithful implementation we can ensure the peaceful coexistence of states, nations and peoples, the achievement of economic and social progress and sustainable development.

Parliaments should do everything in their power to support and improve the work of all UN agencies. It is fair to say that one of the functions of parliaments is to closely monitor compliance with the relevant agreements and, if necessary, promptly respond to violations of them. After all, the work of parliaments is based on the principles of social justice, civil peace and harmony.

The Republic of Belarus is an open European country that has managed to build relations with the outside world over the years of its sovereign existence without compromising its national interests. The state policy focuses on individuals, their rights, needs and social guarantees, while the state's internal and external policies are in line with the goals of sustainable development.

Belarus has proved that it is a donor of security in the European region and the world. The balanced position of the Belarusian side in relation to conflicts, as well as the role of Minsk as a platform for negotiations on their settlement, is a significant positive factor. Today, the country's significant contribution to creating the necessary conditions for the negotiation process and stabilizing the situation in the Ukraine is widely recognized. After all, it

was the Normandy Four summit and the Minsk Agreements that contributed to the de-escalation of the conflict.

Belarusian parliamentarians attach particular importance to the initiative of the President of the Republic of Belarus on the need to start a broad international dialogue to restore confidence and strengthen security. It is necessary to restore the values of the Helsinki agreements and the Paris Charter for a new Europe, which firmly guarantee the sovereign right of peoples to live and create in peace, choose their own path of development and look confidently into the future.

At the same time, small and medium-sized countries can and should make a significant contribution to this process. For example, Belarus has proposed to adopt a multilateral political declaration of the responsible countries on the non-deployment of medium- and shorter-range missiles in Europe.

Speaking about the problems of the modern world, I regret to say that the existing contradictions and competition between countries are increasingly moving to the virtual dimension.

We constantly hear about destructive hacker attacks, crimes in the world wide web, misinformation, and fake news. All this logically leads to the need to expand interstate digital cooperation and increase mutual trust in the information sphere.

In this regard, during the international conference on combating terrorism using information technologies, which was held in Minsk in September 2019, the Belarusian Head of State proposed to form a “belt of digital good-neighborhood”. We suggest concluding agreements on ensuring international information security based on the principles of digital sovereignty and neutrality, as well as non-interference of countries in each other’s information resources. This is how a multi-lateral approach should look like.

We call on all the parliaments to join and support the unifying peace initiatives of that kind.

The fight against all types and forms of modern slavery and human trafficking should also remain in the focus of our attention.

People have the right and will move to other places in search of a better life or fleeing because of war, conflict, natural disasters and catastrophes. By the way, at its time Belarus hosted more than 150 thousand migrants from the Ukraine, ensure them with everything they needed, providing assistance in employment, medical care, social and psychological adaptation.

However, under no circumstances can we allow these difficult life situations to be used by international criminal organizations in their own purposes. In this regard, it is important to increase joint efforts to limit the scale of human smuggling and trafficking. Belarus has repeatedly initiated resolutions on combating human trafficking that were adopted at the UN General Assembly and in the frameworks of the OSCE. We support the formation of an effective global partnership aimed to combat slavery and human trafficking.

The foundation of security and equal cooperation in the twenty-first century should be close economic cooperation, scientific and technical partnership and exchange of technologies.

The dynamic development of modern States, most sections of the economy, and improving the quality of life of the world's population is inextricably linked with the introduction of new technologies. And our task is to ensure that the achievements of human mind are available and in demand in all corners of our planet and serve for the benefit of all mankind. Technological breakthroughs should bridge the gap between poor and rich countries and ensure the principles of social responsibility and justice in practice. We will not be able to build a world worthy of the twenty-first century and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals without this.

Like any other country, Belarus faces the challenges of the digital reality era. We have set a course to build an IT country, turning the IT sector into a powerful pinch-bar (accelerator) of economic development. Today, 1 billion people in the world use mobile applications developed by residents of the Hi-Tech Park created in the country. Belarus will be further committed to the most rapid integration of the latest technologies in all spheres of life of the Belarusian society, and hopes for close and mutually beneficial cooperation with all countries in this area.

Dear colleagues,

Parliaments have a huge potential in addressing key challenges of our times. Our power is in our close connection with the voters, the principles of social equality and social justice which are fundamental. The high mission of parliamentarians in the international stage is to promote peaceful coexistence of states and to provide unconditional mutual support. This is how we can overcome any crisis situations.

It is my firm belief that working together, drawing on the principles of multilateralism and the principles behind the establishment of the United Nations, we will be able to overcome any political, religious or cultural

differences. And on this ground create a more just world in which everyone can discover and bring into life their full potential for the benefit of themselves and society.