

17 August 2020

ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IGOR
ZORČIČ

**"Parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that ensures
peace and sustainable development for both people and the planet"**

Dear Colleagues,

Today, the issue of strengthening multilateralism is more important than ever before. Multilateralism builds on universal values such as peace, human rights and freedoms, the well-being of the community and a decent life for people, as well as caring for the environment and strengthening the economy towards the just development of society.

Slovenia pursues the goal of strengthening and deepening global cooperation, while its activities are also aimed at promoting good neighbourly relations, emphasising the importance of respecting the rule of law and strengthening cooperation in a number of regional initiatives and processes.

Slovenia is actively participating in building an international environment in which international organisations operate effectively and, above all, respond quickly to modern challenges. Especially at a time when the world is being shaken by unrest in many regions. The European Union is facing a new formulation and policy-making in all areas since the United Kingdom left the EU. During the same period, both the entire European and international community was hit by one of the greatest public health crises of modern times. Although we all, together and individually, responded quickly to COVID-19, it was not quick enough. This is one of the reasons why Slovenia supports the reform of the United Nations, with the aim of better governance, greater flexibility and, above all, a faster response to challenges. The world cannot and must not allow closed borders in common crises. Politicians must show that the borders of countries have reached a historical milestone, beyond which cooperation is essential. That is why multilateralism is so very important. Within it, there are no borders.

Slovenia's activities at the UN are traditionally focused on maintaining peace and security, strengthening respect for international law and protecting human rights. Slovenia is also active in the field of sustainable development, including the areas of combating climate change, protecting the environment and water resources, circular economy, and in the field of technologies of the future, such as digitalisation and artificial intelligence.

The turning point in global development was certainly 2015, when the UN adopted the Post-2015 Development Agenda, thus defining a new approach of the international community to development. I am pleased that the Inter-

Parliamentary Union, as the umbrella international parliamentary organisation, has been paying special attention to this issue in its activities for many years.

On this occasion, I would like to inform you that in July 2020, Slovenia presented its second voluntary national review of meeting the sustainable development goals of the 2030 Agenda. According to the index of achieved sustainable development goals, Slovenia ranks 12th among 166 countries, while according to its COVID-19 response index it ranks 7th. It scored the highest in the prevention and eradication of all forms of poverty, and also ranks at the very top among countries with high economic growth. Slovenia is thus making progress in almost all 17 set goals. I would also like to highlight the progress made in increasing the share of agricultural land for organic production and in recycling municipal waste.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a fact that this year has been marked by the COVID-19 pandemic in virtually all areas. Every country is facing the fight against the virus and is looking for solutions for its economy, while encouraging all efforts to develop new vaccines, diagnostic tests, antimicrobials and other medicines as soon as possible, thus ensuring the safe and effective treatment of infections. Slovenia pays special attention to this area, as outstanding scientists from Slovenia's National Institute of Chemistry actively cooperate with foreign scientists from many universities and institutes. And, right now, the National Institute of Chemistry is already testing a partial vaccine, the first test from six different checks.

The quality and affordability of the vaccine will be crucial, regardless of where the vaccine, medicines and diagnostic methods are developed and how their development is funded. Accelerated development in all these areas and timely production on a large enough scale and, at the same time, an even, equitable and fair distribution is in the interest of all of us, also in terms of limiting and reducing economic and social damage caused by otherwise urgent measures to protect public health.

Even before the crisis, Slovenia was a strong advocate of access to a wide range of effective, safe and high-quality medicines at reasonable and affordable prices on a global level. In this light, Slovenia has joined several international initiatives, including the Coronavirus Global Response Initiative, launched by the European Commission together with the World Health Organization and other partners to develop, manufacture and use vaccines, diagnostics and treatments, and to strengthen national health systems in the fight against COVID-19. However, I expect that this will also be one of the important topics of Slovenia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2021, when we would like to set the possibility of a common European fight against pandemics and epidemics.

I would also like to support the call of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who called for a green recovery following the pandemic by building more sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies.

Dear Colleagues,

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations entitled: "The Future We Want, the UN We Need: Reaffirming our Collective Commitment to Multilateralism".

The challenges that lie ahead are our common challenges, so we need an inclusive, effective and genuine global partnership based on established principles of joint and shared responsibility. In addition to the protection of human rights, the rule of law and the protection of democratic principles, it is also necessary to connect information, energy and material flows in order to take politics without borders from paper to reality.

It is up to all of us to pursue these goals diligently and with all responsibility, but above all also sustainably and with a view to providing the well-being of all people.

Thank you.