

Distinguished Chairman,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to greet you from Belgrade, from the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia. I believe that the IPU activities related to the application of the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments are extremely important, which is why I would use the opportunity in the beginning to thank the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliament of Uganda for organising this Round Table. As regards parliamentary monitoring and evaluation and the manners in which institutions are monitored, I am really glad that the Inter-Parliamentary Union recognises efforts of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and its results achieved so far.

As you already know, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia has established a Focus Group for developing mechanisms for monitoring the SDGs implementation process. Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is a common obligation of the whole international community, individual states, and of each MP and an individual. We believe it is extremely important that parliaments are involved in this process and make their own contributions to the SDGs implementation process, but also to develop mechanisms for monitoring this process. The Focus Group was established in 2017 and in the previous term of office, it included 13 MPs from several parliamentary groups, both those in position and those in the opposition, including the Speaker of the NARS, two Deputy Speakers, Secretary General, four chairs of most relevant committees whose scope of work includes majority of the goals, three heads of the most important informal groups separately tackling individual issues such as environmental protection, gender equality and fight against corruption. Having in mind that this is an election year in Serbia, I expect the composition of the Focus Group of this term of office to be established in the forthcoming weeks. As representatives of the Focus Group, while advocating the ideas of the Sustainable Development Goal, we presented our ideas and work and participated in various seminars and conferences. Moreover, we represented the NARS in a Panel on SDGs at the meeting of the IPU Standing Committee on UN Affairs at 138th Assembly in Geneva, as well as the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development at the UN Headquarters in New York last year. The NA RS hosted a Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia in Belgrade, 24-25 May 2018 where we shared our experiences. Furthermore, we started raising

awareness of MPs on significance of SDGs and we started preparing National Assembly's working bodies, that is, committees for future monitoring of SDGs implementation, as we would like the Committees that deal with relevant issues and have a direct contact with competent Ministries to be responsible for monitoring SDGs implementation. So far, 11 out of 12 parliamentary Committees have had discussions on significance of SDGs, and the Foreign affairs Committee organised a public hearing on this topic in November 2017. In June last year, the National Assembly organised a public hearing where the Minister and the representative of the inter-departmental Group for SDGs presented the first Voluntary National Review. This public hearing was attended by MPs and National Assembly staff, representatives of state institutions, members of the Inter-Departmental Group for Implementation of the UN Agenda 2030, and representatives numerous international organisations and NGOs. Our efforts related to SDGs gave first results so that the 2018 and 2019 Budget Law Proposals and laws on rebalance and budget system and some other Laws had many amendments related to SDGs.

In 2017 a self-assessment of the existing SDGs implementation monitoring mechanisms was carried out. The Self-Assessment was done in line with the IPU's Self-Assessment Toolkit - Parliaments and Sustainable Development Goals, which we translated into Serbian with the support of the local UNDP Office. Each member of the Focus Group was in charge of a special cluster of questions, and there are 8 of these groups of questions in the Toolkit. We also organised an open debate which helped us establish to what extent the National Assembly had developed capacities for monitoring the SDGs implementation. Last year, we organised a Workshop where we evaluated the Self-assessment and spoke about financing of the Sustainable Development Goals. Besides the Focus Group members, the Workshop was also attended by representatives of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and the State Audit Institution. The Workshop consisted of four sessions focused on the Group's activities, where we reviewed previous activities and drew up plans for future activities and evaluation of the Self-Assessment, and we also discussed implementation and financing of the SDGs. After each session, there was a debate where all the participants shared their ideas and opinions. The evaluation of the Self-Assessment enabled us to objectively review everything that had been done until then, to identify the segments where we had made progress and to establish a plan for further action..... Some of the conclusions were that it was necessary to include local self-governments into the whole process, to increase an interest of the public through the media at both national and local levels,

and to continue raising public awareness of the relevance of proper SDGs implementation. We believe that it is important that such a message is sent from the National Assembly, both for the citizens and for the Executive. The idea is to launch a campaign to be carried out in towns across Serbia where MPs will speak to the youth, above all - from the kindergartens, primary and secondary schools, to universities, about importance of SDGs implementation for their future, but also to local authorities, civil associations and the media. We would like to hear their needs and ideas about manners in which we could make Serbia a better place for living.

Besides the self-assessment of the Parliament's preparedness with regard to SDGs and evaluation of this self-assessment, we have also carried out a self-assessment of the Parliament's gender sensitivity, together with the IPU and with the support of the UNDP. Besides the Focus Group members, the Workshop was also attended by representatives of the Women Parliamentary Network and the National Assembly's staff, and the process was moderated by an IPU expert. It was assessed that the National Assembly is way over an average when it comes to representation of women. Irrespective of the great results, we went a step further. We introduced amendments to electoral laws, so that now they lay down that 40% of the candidates in electoral lists are of the under-represented sex, and that among five candidates in electoral lists, at least two need to be of the under-represented sex. The elections in Serbia were held in June this year in this spirit, and I am proud of the representation, participation and contribution that our dear women colleagues make to the highest representative and legislative body.

I would particularly emphasize the important role the IPU and UNDP had in these processes with whose support and assistance we managed to carry out the above activities.

Although we have made some significant results so far, we remain committed to our goal and idea to make better conditions for all of us and for the coming generations and thus make Serbia a better place to live. However, these are not issues of local, but rather universal nature and relevance. This is why I hope we will remain committed to our ideas, which the IPU and the Agenda 2030 are founded on, and that we will continue working together, sharing experiences and providing support to each other in order to make a better world for everyone.

Thank you for your attention!