

STATEMENT

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PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF
ARMENIA
AT THE 140TH IPU ASSEMBLY GENERAL DEBATE
DOHA, 6-10 APRIL 2019*

Distinguished President,

Fellow parliamentarians,

Ladies and gentlemen,

May I start my statement by thanking our host, the Parliament of the State of Qatar for the wonderful organization of the Assembly and warm reception.

As it is said by famous educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi “The Education we wish to promote is linked to the type of society we wish to create”. Exactly one year ago the people of Armenia stood up expressing their will to live in a state that protects human rights and fundamental freedoms, in a state where the rule of law is guaranteed. Our people realized their strive in the most peaceful non-violent way which is well known now as the velvet revolution or Armenian way of doing revolutions. Indeed, human rights and equal opportunities are priorities in the democratic processes of the New Armenia. We are convinced that the rule of law and strong citizenship are a pledge for a strong society and, hence a strong State.

The topic of today’s general debate is extremely important from the perspective of ensuring peace and security, and upholding human rights, as parliaments play a crucial role in educating people.

The role of Parliament obviously is not only adopting laws and policies. Parliamentarians have a duty to promote the values they believe in, acting as multipliers. In this regard, it's worth to mention that early parliamentary elections in Armenia, that took place in December 2018, were reported to be democratic, transparent, free and fair, reestablishing public trust in elections, which was lost during the past decades.

Our parliament pays special attention to promoting education, because we believe it is a fundamental human right, and members of parliament act as role models for upcoming generation. The new leadership of Armenia is taking tangible efforts to foster the sense of citizenship and to strengthen the civic participation. In this regard recently the Armenian Government took a decision to establish Citizen's Day. It will be celebrated on the last Saturday of April to mark the national movement, which resulted in the victory of the Armenian people as they reasserted their right to the peaceful change of power. This is a perfect occasion to encourage public dialogue related to peace, security and the rule of law

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to highlight the importance of women in the peacebuilding process, stated in the UN resolutions and international documents. To create lasting peace, we need women's voices. The new Armenian parliament saw a significant rise in women members of parliament. Out of 132 MPs 32 are women. It is the highest number in the history of our parliament. We already feel the power of women because they are well-educated, smart and dynamic and are able to tackle difficult issues from different perspectives. I hope, you will agree that innovation plays a crucial role in 21st-century education. It should be noted that Armenia lacks natural resources but has a huge intellectual potential, so it is no surprise that Armenia attaches great importance to the development of the IT sector, which led to a very interesting phenomenon: many Armenian IT specialists are now able to

work abroad and, paradoxically, it has not resulted in the brain drain. On the contrary, they are able to contribute to the Armenian economy, and to make sure that we start at the very early age. In Armenia we have TUMO centres for creative technologies, which are specifically designed to engage and reveal young talents. This is indeed a good practice and innovation in Armenia's education model we could share with other countries and inspire other successful initiatives. The entire idea proved to be so successful that a similar centre recently opened in Paris.

Modern theories on peace suggest the notion of positive peace, which is defined as the absence of structural violence. Truly said "Peace does not mean the total absence of any conflict. It means the absence of violence in all forms and the unfolding of conflict in a constructive way". I can proudly claim that you will not find even a slightest trace of xenophobia, intolerance and hate speech in our educational materials, including textbooks for children. History shows that hate speech can escalate to hate crimes and genocide. This is a very sensitive topic for us, as 1,5 million Armenians became victims of Genocide back in 1915. Today you will never hear any bellicose rhetoric from any leader of Armenia. And this is what we expect from our neighbors as well. There have been many instances when we drew the attention of the international community to the unacceptable facts of hatred, xenophobia and outright racism in some of the educational materials in use in some of our neighboring countries, including even kindergartens. This is not how you prepare the population for peace. You should always prepare your children and the young generation for peace. And we strongly believe that we should focus on peace since it is a pledge for security and is a universal value for all.

Dear Colleagues,

Education could be a long-term investment in preventing violent extremism, radicalization, crimes against humanity and genocides. It is an important condition if we want to shape a society we all are striving for. The engagement of youth in all these endeavors is a must, too. Moreover, in order to prevent violent extremism we should focus on cultural and educational exchanges, promote arts and ensure

interconnection with nations through new technologies. All this could transform into a high degree of motivation for peace-building, tolerance and peaceful co-existence.