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**Speech**

**Parliamentary guidance on promoting peace and development in the era of innovation and technological change.**

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We live in an historical conjuncture where major changes and displacements occur on an international scale. Traditional perceptions are transformed, and human conquests of centuries are in question. New forces are emerging on the planet as power centers, both economically and culturally, are shifting and new competitions are on the scene.

At the same time, we live in the age of great scientific and technological achievements. The new digital world and the immense development of innovation and micro-applications offer enormous facilities in a number of branches: From Medicine and Physics to Environment Communication and the Arts.

Despite the tremendous development of science and technology, mankind does not have better days and the problems remain strong.

Europe and the wider Mediterranean region are being tested by a huge refugee wave caused by the conflicts and wars in the Middle East. Conflicts and wars that emerge from the west.

Even within the Western world there is a revival of extreme intolerant views, undemocratic attitudes, and an increase in hate rhetorical. Far-right racist parties claim power, and there is an outcry of all kinds of nationalisms.

The debate we are currently taking in Geneva concerns peace and development.

But what is peace and what is development? We ask these questions because the definition of these concepts is part of the same problem.

Peace is not just non-war. Peace is democracy, it is the non-exploitation of people, social groups or nations, it is social justice, equality in education, equality in medical care. It is knowledge itself. It is all that prevent the root causes of conflicts.

Worldwide, about one trillion dollars a year are spent on equipment. Meanwhile, global inequality is steadily rising, with about half of the world's population living in

poverty. So compare this expense for weapons systems, which has not increased security in the world, with much smaller sums to deal with natural disasters, killing tens or even hundreds of thousands of people, or those given for the fight against hunger, illness and illiteracy.

What is development? Is it the intensification of the industry and the simultaneous unexpected destruction of the environment? Is it the intensification of agricultural production with the use of so many chemical substances or with genetically modified plants, hence food, with adverse health effects? Will we inhibit this growth or control it? Are there enormous advances in science, which, however, coexist with a widespread illiteracy in Third World countries? Or the enormous advances in medicine that cure illnesses that were up until a few years ago incurable when people in third world countries die from vitiligo?

These questions are not new. But they are becoming more and more urgent.

Scientists and parliamentarians from all over the world are concerned about their own responsibilities in terms of the role and the debt of science and politics towards peace and development.

We all live on the same planet and we are all part of the same biosphere. We are all aware that we are in a state of growing interdependence and that our future is inextricably linked to the preservation and protection of all systems that support life on the planet and the survival of all forms of life.

Nations and scientists around the world are urged to realize that there is an urgent need to use knowledge from all fields of science responsibly to meet the needs of man and his expectations and to prevent the misuse of this knowledge.

Scientific knowledge has undoubtedly led to remarkable innovations, which have been very beneficial to mankind. But, the key question is: development and science for whom?

Apart from the proven benefits, the applications of scientific progress and development have caused a number of problems, which are increasing. Contamination of the environment and overexploitation of natural resources, even if some leaders deny it, is today the number one problem internationally.

Nowadays, with the tremendous progress in science and technology, there is a growing need for an active and informative democratic debate on the production and use of scientific knowledge. Parliaments can certainly play a leading role in this. For example, my country, Greece, has created and led a major summit, which is made up of the world's premier civilizations and aims to create common ideas for peace, science and development. Such cross-thematic initiatives can open up thinking and shape new scientific guidelines.

However, long-term commitment by all stakeholders, both the state and the private sector, is required to contribute to strengthening the role of science in a world of justice, prosperity and sustainability through greater investment in science, an appropriate revision of investment priorities, and free access to scientific knowledge.

In practice and in essence, it is now necessary to propose some axes for the more efficient use of new technology and innovations in a socially beneficial way.

These axes could be summarized as follows:

A) Global cooperation among scientists should contribute to global security and the development of peaceful interactions between different nations, societies and cultures and should encourage further steps for disarmament, including nuclear disarmament.

B) Governments and society should be deeply aware of the need to use technology and science to recognize the underlying causes and effects of conflicts, and increased investment in scientific research that has these goals.

C) All levels of government and the private sector should provide increased support to build an adequate and evenly distributed scientific and technological capacity through appropriate educational and research programs as necessary foundations for economic, social, cultural and environmentally sound development.

D) Science and technology should be firmly oriented towards expectations of better employment, improved competitiveness and social justice. Increased investment in science and technology, aimed at these directions, as well as a better understanding and protection of the planet's natural resources, biodiversity and systems that support life on the planet. The goal must be to move towards sustainable development strategies, where economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions coexist.

On this platform could be built education, communication and popularization of science.

It is more than ever necessary to develop and spread scientific literacy in all cultures and in all sectors of society, as well as mental competences, skills and appreciation of moral values, so as to improve citizen participation in decision-making concerning the application of new knowledge.

Science and technology away from the needs of citizens is not understood. This is the challenge of modern times and concerns both parliamentarians and scientists.