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Theme 2: Implementing the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals: contribution by Parliaments

Under the presidency of Mr. Gérard LARCHER, President, Senate, France

Thank you, Madame President.

This intervention concludes our debate. I would like to thank President CAROBBIO GUSCETTI and President FERRAND for introducing the theme, as well as the many speakers who have enriched our common reflection on this fundamental issue for the assemblies we chair.

I propose that we now turn to the second theme of our conference, on the contribution of parliaments to the implementation of the United Nations Programme 2030 and its sustainable development objectives.

It is the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Ms Gabriela CUEVAS BARRÓN, who will do us the honour of introducing the debate. Thank you in advance.

No doubt, Madame President, that your contribution will enrich the reflection of our conference in the light of your experience in the Mexican Parliament over the past ten years and at the head of our Inter-Parliamentary Union over the past two years.

I give you the floor, Madame President.

Ms Gabriela CUEVAS BARRON, President of the Inter-parliamentary Union

It is an honour to be here today, taking part in this important meeting and addressing an issue that is absolutely crucial, not only to the Inter-Parliamentary Union but to humanity as a whole: namely, the UN's 2030 Agenda.

Back in 2015, our governments adopted this Development Agenda in the General Assembly of the United Nations and it is made up of goals and objectives. Now, this is the most ambitious project that humanity has ever undertaken. What we're trying to do is look at how we can create a truly inclusive planet, a world that truly leaves no one behind. We have ten years now to save the planet and five years ago this agenda seemed very difficult to achieve but now, five years later, we realise that it is an imperative. We need to roll up our sleeves and get down to work.

Now, we can talk a great deal about the commitments that we entered into by signing up to Agenda 2030 and yes, it is quite true, we have an important role to play in our law-making work, so we not only need to pass new laws, but make sure that we enforce existing laws, because in many of our countries, we have many laws, which continue to be discriminatory against women, against children, against immigrants, and this is in the 21st century. Our legal systems are not inclusive. Now, above and beyond our law-making functions, which you know, I think we do what it says on the tin, if you like, we are lawmakers, but we have to go beyond that.

Now, in my own country, a lot of us tend to say that truly you've got to look at the budget, because if your priority is not budgeted for, then your priority simply doesn't exist. And that is why it is absolutely crucial that the Sustainable Development Agenda be incorporated in the international budgets and we need to keep a watchful eye and make sure that it is.

We also need to ensure, in our parliaments, that we work with the government to implement this Agenda but at the same time we are able to call our governments to account. So what we do is walk hand in hand with one another, but we keep in the back of our minds our very important role in performing oversight. And we need to ensure that we have a space for cooperation as well as for calling the governments to account and demanding that they deliver; that is all part of implementing the 2030 Agenda.

Now, one of the biggest assets of our parliaments, and one of the biggest assets of parliamentary diplomacy – unlike traditional diplomacy, where you hear just the voices of governments and the voices of majorities – is the fact that parliaments are where both representatives of both majorities and minorities come together. So different political ways of thinking and different sections of the community can have their voices reflected because they then have to go home to make sure that international commitments are then transformed into local action.

What we have to do now is look at where the SDGs are being most effectively implemented. We have to join together in working to further all of the goals in Agenda 2030 because there are many challenges that we still face in Europe; 12, 13 and 14 are the SDGs that have to do with our responsibilities in terms of consumption, production with climate change, as well as caring for our oceans. But at the same time, there are other objectives, where we have very good indicators, for example, in fighting poverty. But there is no part of the world where those objectives are being truly achieved, and this is where parliamentarians come in.

And this leads me onto a second thought that I would like to share with you and that is that we need a more equal and inclusive planet, precisely because that is the best way of nurturing and nourishing our democracies.

Now, much is done in the way of getting our parliaments and democracies to listen more to citizens. Societies are undergoing rapid change and if we do not change our models of governance, if we do not make sure that parliaments become spaces in which we genuinely listen to what people are clamouring for, then it's going to be extremely difficult for us to make the changes that we need for our planet.

These days, politicians – and parliamentarians in particular – bear particular responsibility and it may be that people think that democracy and human rights can be taken for granted, that they've been achieved once and for all. But, here, in the 21st century, the fact of the matter is that democracy and human rights have not been 100 percent achieved in all countries and in all regions.

There are many countries that believe that we can continue to forge ahead with the same strategies of the past century. We've got discrimination, we've got nationalism, we've got political and racist nationalisms, and we are now starting to see – as the United Nations next year will be celebrating important anniversaries – just how important multilateralism still is.

But we have to try and offer new content to our multilateralism. We need to look at the local level, look at the quality of representatives at a time in which we need to explain what multilateralism is to people back home. But, as parliamentarians, there is still a great deal that we can do and there in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, we have worked very hard, first of all, to generate awareness of the need for this Agenda and, secondly, to make sure that people have the information they need to implement it at national level.

So, let me stress this point: you can't simply talk about the planet without thinking about how you implement these goals on the ground. So, we carried out a survey in the Inter-Parliamentary Union asking national parliaments how they were participating in their countries' voluntary projects. And, out of all the countries we asked, we only got about 89 replies. Forty-seven parliaments were taking part along with their countries in the process of revising the implementation of the SDGs, but there were only 16 of the 47 who were taking part in any significant degree. And this means, therefore, that generally speaking, parliaments are simply not involved in the Sustainable Development Agenda. How can we change that? How can we make sure that parliaments are the ones to strike, not only international but also local agreements?

We have a saying whereby this Agenda really needs to be in the hearts of people. So above and beyond are budgets and our parliamentary systems, and above and beyond our oversight, it is important that we talk about the Agenda in our parliaments. It is not something that can be left solely to the executive, and I continue to stress the point that if we continue to see discrimination and inequality then nothing – nothing – is going to change in any of our countries.

I would like to highlight the importance of the fact that we are representatives because parliaments, after all, are a forum in which we represent people. We love to say that parliaments can act as a forum for all voices, but there are many people that we are leaving behind, in reality. In fact, we are leaving most of the planet behind.

First of all, you've got people under the age of 30, who make up more than half of our global population. But, if you were to extrapolate from that figure and you were to have the proportion of those young people in our parliaments and you were to contrast that with the two percent that they account for right now. So, you can see that our parliaments are not properly representing all of our populations, and the same is true for the 50 percent that our gender accounts for.

So, it's not good for women, it's not good for young people. And that is why, when we, in our region, look to Europe, then we see that 29.3 percent of parliamentarians are women, and 3.9 percent are young people under the age of 30. So, we look at those figures in Europe, but if you look at the global average, then you realise that there are only ten countries, anywhere in the world, that actually have gender parity.

Let me remind you that our planet is made up of two genders. We do have parity on the planet, so that is why we have to look at quotas for women as well as quotas for young people, because this is the reality and we have to change our systems and we have to make sure that more women can get into parliament. We also have to change the law, because two out of three countries do not even allow young people under the age of 30 to stand for parliament in the first place. They are allowed to vote and they are allowed to get married, but there are all kinds of important decisions in their lives that they are excluded from. That is why we need better representation for young people in our parliaments.

Finally, the Sustainable Development Agenda has to be a place of unity, where all voices come together calling on governments. We're talking about representation across the board so that we can drive forward the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Now, when we're talking about multilateralism, I think that we would all wish to defend it as it is undergoing a crisis and its institutions, such as this one, which brings so many people around the same table, is the prime place so as to do so.

Multilateralism has made significant achievements and we have, of course, had to overcome the devastation of both the First and the Second World Wars, but despite those achievements, we are seeing these days, a lot of backsliding and we are hearing many political leaders trying to do away with multilateralism. However, Europe has done very well in the past in terms of implementing the Sustainable Development Agenda, and so, yes, you are doing okay when it comes to representation of women and young people, and it's important to recognise that although you're on the right path, you must not allow any backsliding.

That is why it is absolutely crucial that we do push forward cooperation policies because when you look at the global situation and implementation of the Sustainable Development Agenda overall – and Europe can sometimes be seen as an isolated unit that tends to notch up better indicators than other regions of the world – but Ladies and Gentlemen, we need to work together as parliamentarians to make sure that these very good results can be replicated on other latitudes and that is why I hope, on the basis of such interesting discussions amongst parliamentarians, we can continue to work together in a coordinated way, with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and with real resolve and determination.

And I am only the second woman to have presided over the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 130 years and that is why it is so important that we join together in trying to eliminate sexual harassment of women in our parliaments. Parliaments are, of course, the home of democracy, and we must put an end to all forms of discrimination and violence against women wherever that might be, once and for all.

Thank you very much.

Mr Jorodd ASPHJELL, Vice-President, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

The 2030 Agenda of the United Nations is of concern to all of us. It has become the central topic at the national level in many countries. Achieving it means securing our future for generations to come. That is why we, as parliamentarians and representatives of the people, must keep focusing on these issues – both individually and in our parliamentary organisations.

Regarding the SDGs, or the Sustainable Development Goals on Climate Action, we must urge our governments to act; to do more and to do it quickly. The future of our children and grandchildren is at stake. And we have all seen how the young generations are losing patience.

As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to listen and to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. Many countries have taken far-reaching measures over a long time to meet the objectives. Parliamentary cooperation could here play a decisive role. By cooperating, we will achieve a much larger impact and we will have a far better chance of success.

We, as parliamentarians, are responsible for the future development in our countries. Agenda 2030 was the main topic for the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, both in 2018 and this year. A special focus has been on removing plastic waste and to restore the oceans. In August of this year, the Norwegian Parliament hosted the annual BSPC-meeting in Oslo. The BSPC is the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

The city of Oslo has made a considerable effort to become more environmentally friendly over the past years. It has conserved its natural areas, cleaned up the Oslo Fjord and restored the city's waterways. This was one of the reasons why Oslo proudly won the European Green Capital Award for 2019.

The environmental aspects of the Baltic Sea was a hot topic in the BSPC. Industrial waste and fertiliser from farming have made the sea more polluted. In our resolutions, we urge our governments to take action and achieve the objectives of Agenda 2030 as soon as possible. Appropriate strategies and measures must be pursued.

On the executive side, the Council of the Baltic Sea States is making progress in this direction. We are also promoting, supporting and involving initiatives among young people to achieve the SDGs. An example is the activities done by the international network under the name "Regeneration 2030".

The BSPC has also taken new steps in interparliamentary cooperation when discussing the health of our seas with our colleagues from the Black Sea region. Together we can move forward through mutual cooperation and exchange of best practices between all countries. We believe that parliamentary cooperation plays a key role in achieving the SDGs.

Therefore, let's continue to work together on this in the future. Only then will the next generation pay tribute to what we have done.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let's get to work. Let's get involved. Let's develop ideas and visions to help both the people who elected us and future generations to live in a peaceful and sustainable world. Thank you.

Under the presidency of Ms Liliane MAURY PASQUIER, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Ms Roser SUÑÉ PASCUET, President, Consell General, Andorra

Sustainable development is central to all levels of political decision-making around us, either locally or internationally. For this reason, we consider that the topic chosen for this session corresponds to the interests of people all over the world and we hope that the joint reflection we will bring will contribute to strengthening its application.

As we already know, international organizations are continually trying to produce a diversity of global instruments aimed at ensuring sustainable development in its three dimensions, economic, social and environmental. Most of these documents and guidelines are not binding. Each country decides how and by what means it will achieve the goals at the national level, even if it is generally accepted that countries contribute voluntarily to them, in order to advance the prosperity of the world's inhabitants.

The last of these instruments were developed after the adoption of Agenda 2030 and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the 70th United Nations General Assembly. These ODDs are regularly updated so that their achievement is effective and the achievement of results is more visible.

At the heart of these 17 Goals is the thesis that the eradication of poverty and inequality, the creation of inclusive economic growth and the preservation of the planet are totally linked. Therefore, as States, we must strive to build intersectoral partnerships in order to foster exchange on important issues in society and, in particular, on sensitive issues such as respect for human rights, education and the environment.

We are trying to translate these Global Goals into local solutions. As a result, the Government of the Principality of Andorra presented a first national report on the MDGs, specifically those related to the environment and education, to the Forum on Sustainable Development in New York in 2018.

As recommended in Resolution 2272, adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe last April, its implementation is primarily the responsibility of the government. However, we parliamentarians – holders of legislative power and representatives of the people – play an essential role in controlling and monitoring the implementation of these MDGs, on the one hand, and in disseminating and raising awareness among citizens, on the other.

The General Council, which I have the honour to represent, is familiar with Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Next year, Andorra will organize the 26th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government on the theme of innovation for sustainable development and the 2030 Goals.

To this end, a meeting of parliamentarians from the 22 Member States of the Organisation will be held to prepare a text that reflects the parliamentary initiatives that support the proposal. In addition, the parliamentary groups that make up the majority of the Chamber have worked – together with the young representatives of the "Fridays For Future" movement – on a motion for a Resolution for the recognition of the climate crisis, and a declaration of the state of emergency on climate and ecology was tabled last Friday, to start the legislative process. Finally, the General Council will be part of working groups that must define the actions related to national sustainable development objectives that we must include in each of the laws we can promote.

These objectives are: to maintain quality education by promoting democratic citizenship and human rights; to consolidate social well-being in an inclusive and resilient society; to ensure the preservation of the planet for future generations in a society linked to nature; to promote the openness and diversification of a sustainable economy; and to preserve the rule of law in a safe and peaceful society.

Ladies and gentlemen, recalling the motto of the European Union, "In varietate concordia" ("Unity in diversity") but also that of Andorra, "Virtus unita fortior" ("The united virtue is stronger"), I believe in a future where humanity can be united in all its diversity and will work collectively for peace and prosperity. A world that will foster peaceful, inclusive and just societies. A world based on sustainable prosperity, built in harmony with nature. A world that we must protect so that future generations can enjoy it in all its splendour.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Meritxell BATET, Speaker, Congreso de los Diputados, Spain

It is an honour to be taking part in this gathering and to share some thoughts with you about Agenda 2030 and attaining Sustainable Development Goals.

It won't be possible to achieve Agenda 2030 without having the necessary foundations and minimum guarantees, which are the principles of the Rule of Law and legality. SDG's also mean that there will be a guarantee of public security, as well as coexistence between different groups in our societies. In Spain, we have a fully democratic state governed by the rule of law with a Constitution, which enshrines separation of powers, and makes sure that all our public authorities comply with the law, respect human rights, and all of this is overseen by the ordinary courts and the Constitutional Court.

The upshot of all of this is that there is no risk to the validity of Human Rights in Spain, quite the opposite; we are more committed to them than ever before. Nor is that the case in Catalonia. I am from Barcelona and I can affirm that today without hesitation. Now, there are two problems in Catalonia, but they should not get confused with one another. First of all, there is a political conflict that dates back a long way, in which there are those who, in our society, aspire to have an independent State and are represented in the Parliament as well as in the Senate. Now, they represent somewhat under half of all Catalans and that accounts for the turnout of peaceful demonstrations organized in recent days. I can assure you that the government is prepared to tackle this conflict through dialogue within the constitutional framework.

But we have a problem with public order and we have had some unacceptable and intolerable outbreaks of violence, and we have to resort to what we have as a State governed by the Rule of Law to face this problem and defend the rights and freedoms of all citizens. The violence is being perpetrated by a minority of demonstrators, and we as the State have to defend the rights and freedoms of all citizens, namely those of Catalonia as a whole. And our security forces depend on different parts of the administration, and we have seen this. We have seen the Mossos d'Esquadra, which is the Catalan security force, joining with the national security forces to restore order.

So, like other countries, we too are faced with the paradox of a world that is increasingly interconnected, but in which we have seen an upsurge in nationalist and populist style movements who are calling for a return to individualism and identitarian retreat. And that is why, ladies and gentlemen, information is so important. Now, SDG 16 emphasises the importance of democratic institutions. And it is important that our institutions take precedence over action in the streets, contrary to what populism is claiming, that we cannot allow. We have the High Commissioner for the 2030 Agenda, as well as the creation of a Council for Sustainable Development, and there are laws against climate change and for the energy transition, as well as strategic plans to fight poverty, inequality and the demographic challenges.

But none of this will be effective if our authorities are not accountable, and the lack of debate, of precise data and of awareness raising means that the most vulnerable of our societies become invisible. And this is where parliaments have an absolutely crucial role to play.

We have agreed to dedicate a parliamentary body for debating and monitoring the Agenda, we have a joint committee of the Congress and the Senate, which coordinates and monitors the Spanish strategy to achieve the SDG's. This committee will not only host parliamentary debates and exchanges with the government, it will also organise debate forums with international authorities, other external agents to our chambers, in particular organizations of civil society. Our joint committee held a joint session with the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, who was paying a visit to Madrid in February and we came up with a number of agreements, which have so far taken the form of a 10 million euro contribution to the United Nation's joint Fund for the SDG's. I think this clearly shows just how committed the Spanish government is, as indeed it has expressed its commitment in the UN General Assembly held on September 25. In other words, our commitment is unwavering; we have made many progresses but a great deal remains to be done. We have a decade of action and the results we achieve depend solely on our will. We have to move ahead together.

Again, our determination is key, and I am grateful to the Council of Europe for including this very important matter in our agenda today. Thank you very much.

Mr Gordan JANDROKOVIĆ, President, Sabor, Croatia

I am glad this topic was included in our exchange of today and that is for two reasons.

First, sustainable development and its goals have been our political commitment since 2000. We further strengthened that commitment with the UN 2030 agenda.

Second, human rights are the Council of Europe's core value, and the sustainable development goals seek to realize the human rights. Therefore it is our direct concern to all the Member States of the Council of Europe. In addition, given the fact that the agenda is not a legally binding document and that the implementation of said goals and targets has been slowed down, it is good that we parliamentarians have an opportunity to exchange views on how to accelerate the progress. In that way we could help revive the political momentum.

We all agree that the implementation of sustainable concepts is crucial for achieving balance between the economic, social and environmental requirements of the present-day globalized society facing a number of challenges, such as poverty, hunger, unemployment, migrations, climate change or security threats. We are also all aware that no country can address these challenges on its own. For that reason Croatia is determined to assume its share of responsibility. For us the dignity of every individual and the respect of the fundamental principle that no one anywhere in the world should be left behind are at the core.

On a national level, one of the first documents related to it was the Declaration on Environmental Protection of Croatia adopted by the Croatian Parliament in 1992, just five months after we had become an internationally

recognized country. Today, the sustainable development strategy from 2009 is the key document, but currently we are in the process of drafting the new 2030 national development strategy. Expanding on the vision we have named "Croatia the way we want it", this strategy will integrate priorities and contribute to the sustainable development and the demographic renewal of Croatia in the next decade. During the drafting process numerous communication activities have been organized and different groups of stakeholders are involved, from the public sector, parliamentarians, civil society, academia and the private sector, to children and young people.

Also, Croatia presented in July this year its first voluntary National Review on the implementation of the agenda. Let me mention that as the SDG index ranks Croatia 22nd out of 162 countries, which gives us a good chance of becoming one of the leaders in the transition to sustainability.

In closing I would like to emphasize that we are finalizing the intense preparations for the Presidency of the European Union in the first half of next year, when we will continue to work on promotion of the agenda within the European Union, the United Nations, the Council of Europe and in other multilateral fora.

Thank you.

Mr Pat The Cope GALLAGHER, Vice-President, Dáil Éireann, Ireland

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address this Assembly again this evening on a topic that is at the heart of discussions all around the world, and I'm particularly delighted of course to be here in 2019, the year that is the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe. I'm proud of the role that my country, along with Kenya, played in facilitating the adoption of these Global Goals by all 193 member States of the United Nations— having done that in 2015 – and that we continue to play a leading role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ireland is working to ensure that our International Development Assistance Programme supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in developing countries. Ireland's new policy on international development, which was published this year, builds on our strengths as a donor and partner. It is at the heart of our contribution to a more equal, peaceful and sustainable world. The emphasis of the new policy is to update our traditional focus on the poorest of the poor, and on the pledge of the SDGs to reach the furthest behind first. In Ireland, a whole government approach has been taken to the Sustainable Development Goal implementation, with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment as its lead department.

The department launched our SDG National Implementation Plan 2018-2020, we did that in April of last year. This plan provides a framework of how Ireland will implement the SDGs and will support and promote policies and initiatives, across government, which contribute towards meeting the SDGs at home and abroad. It identifies opportunities for enhancing policy coherence as well as for raising public awareness of the engagement by all in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Ireland presented its Sustainable Development Goals Voluntary National Review in July of last year, at the annual UN High-level Political Forum. Ireland is committed, we're committed to working to ensure a strategic and coherent approach across government, to its development, cooperation and humanitarian assistance, as well as the continued strengthening of our representation and engagement in the European Union, the United Nations and other multilateral spaces.

Our new policy on international development is framed by the SDGs. We will ensure that this policy reinforces our joint commitment to the European consensus on development. Against the background of strain on the multilateral system, I'm aware of the challenges which the Council of Europe has faced recently. It has intended to invest in select United Nations organisations, and other multilateral partners, with a view of supporting affected multilateralism. In this context, the new policy demonstrates Ireland's commitment under a series of international policies, notably the 2030 Agenda for the SDGs. And taken together, these provide a comprehensive framework for international development cooperation, global policymaking and the implementation of development interventions.

Ireland will, in particular, continue to support small island developing states, which are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, through various means including through our support for the Least Developed Countries Fund and other climate finance instruments, contributions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, specifically the least developed countries and gender support, climate justice partnerships and supporting inclusive innovation that stimulates more investment and long- lasting climate solutions.

To conclude, Madame President, the work of the Irish Parliament's Committee on Climate Action, the debates of the committee report, and the declaration of a climate emergency in May 2019 represent the most focused parliamentary work on the SDGs, as climate change is the biggest threat to their achievement. Sustainable Development Goals recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations, must go hand in hand with strategies

that improve health and education, reduce inequality and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

Thank you very much.

Mr André FLAHAUT, Vice-President, Chambre des Représentants, Belgium

17 objectives in favour of education, equality, health for all, social justice, the fight against hunger, environmental protection.

17 objectives to build a sustainable world.

17 objectives for shared prosperity and development.

17 objectives for peace.

These objectives encourage an approach of solidarity, sharing and respect. The aim is to respond to the challenges of the disoriented world we live in. In this increasingly connected world, identity withdrawal is increasing: this is a sad paradox. Indeed, as international trade intensifies, new walls are constantly emerging. These walls undermine the foundations of our collective existence.

The 17 objectives of the United Nations imply the implementation of a partnership approach based on mutual trust, the sharing of experiences and civic education. This is the logic I have been defending for years. Whether it is for North-South, South-North, North-North, North-North or triangular partnerships, solidarity must always be at the root.

The aim is to build social, economic, commercial, respectful and balanced links, in which local initiatives must always take precedence. People are the common thread of the partnership. Indeed, it is impossible to build prosperous societies without protecting the elderly, the most vulnerable, and without investing in the youngest.

Political decisions must always be tailored to the women and men who will have to live them.

Universal and free access to education, but also to health care and drinking water is a key issue. The dignity of individuals is at stake. This is crucial to their successful integration.

The place of women in the social space must be promoted and protected. Their role is crucial. Our fight, in Belgium, in Europe, for gender equality goes in this direction. This is the meaning of progress.

Helping people regain control of their future and be active citizens: this is the challenge. The development of each individual is the condition for the well-being of all.

Growth cannot ignore human rights or the fundamental values of justice and solidarity. Environmental sustainability, human dignity and the well-being of all must be placed at the heart of wealth creation.

Europe's economic and trade relations, particularly with the South, need to be thoroughly rethought. Very concretely: social and economic progress requires replacing the current free trade system with a model oriented towards "fair trade". Europe must try to forge links, not destroy them.

Belgium has started to align its sectoral policies with Agenda 2030. It is at all levels of power, at national, regional and community level. This alignment has already contributed to a major overhaul of Belgian international development policies. There is still work to be done. But the momentum is on.

In addition, I am pleased to see the renewed engagement of civil society organizations and private sector actors. Many actions have been implemented. They include health, gender equality, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, decent work and biodiversity. All this requires – of course – additional efforts to address specific issues.

The federal Parliament has a role to play: this role is crucial. A special "Climate" law should be on the agenda of our Parliament in this legislature. For this dossier to succeed, because it must succeed, we must act with balance, in dialogue and without haste. Our parliament is committed to contributing in an open and constructive way to the national strategy for sustainable development, in particular through regular hearings with representatives of civil society, the private sector and citizens. Parliamentary diplomacy is also a valuable tool and it is our responsibility.

Dear colleagues,

It is in this double track that the Federal Parliament is working for the success of Agenda 2030. Thank you for your attention.

Mr Demetris SYLLOURIS, President, House of Representatives, Cyprus

I will first like to extend my appreciation to the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Ms Gabriela Cuevas Barron, for her most useful presentation on the theme under discussion. One can say that the Agenda 2030, by integrating economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, also reflects for the first time an ecumenical pursuit of objectives such as justice, security, peace and social inclusion.

Objectives that are strongly interlinked with the core values of the Council of Europe and are therefore of direct relevance to all its Member States and National Parliaments represented in this Parliamentary Assembly.

Although undoubtedly such substantial progress has been achieved in reducing inequalities and lifting people out of poverty and social injustice, it becomes equally evident that economic growth by itself is not adequate to reduce poverty and inequalities, unless all three dimensions of sustainable development are here too. We therefore need to work on the application of global policies that will first and foremost focus on social disparities and more specially on the growing needs of disadvantaged and marginalized people. We need to examine ways and solutions and adopt sound policies towards eliminating any significant disparities that exist between countries, but also within them, to work on solutions that would encourage development assistance to areas in great need.

Dear colleagues, the scrutiny and accountability that Parliaments can introduce in this process can only be to the advantage and benefit of all stakeholders, although the SDGs are primarily a result of a process involving input from governments, civil society and private sector, National Parliaments certainly have a role to play and can substantially support this process as recalled by the United Nations. In this regard, it is each Parliament's responsibility to exercise its oversight power and also to be in position to reflect, monitor and observe the effects as regards achievements of the SDG's, and turn these goals into tangible and measurable national policies. Last but not least, let us not forget that sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace, stability, security, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, all based on the rule of law.

Thank you very much.

Mr Nikola SPIRIĆ, Vice-President, Dom Naroda, Bosnia and Herzegovina

It is an honour to greet you on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia–Herzegovina and in my personal name, and to express my gratitude to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe for the organisation of the conference and the opportunity to address you.

Bosnia–Herzegovina is committed to the 2030 Agenda, which represents a comprehensive global and sustainable agreement for the development of all UN member states and the creation of a new global framework in which economic, social and environmental elements are integrated into a comprehensive development strategy.

Bosnia–Herzegovina is one of 190 UN member states committed to implementing the UN 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. I would like to point out that for Bosnia–Herzegovina the 2030 Agenda is equally related to peace and to development. Bosnia–Herzegovina, with something more than 3.5 million inhabitants, is a country with a significant cultural diversity of three constituent peoples (Bosnians, Serbs and Croats) in which human rights are guaranteed also to all other peoples and citizens.

At the heart of Bosnia–Herzegovina's efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda is a development and the adoption of the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals in Bosnia–Herzegovina. The framework is being developed as part of an extensive and ongoing consultation process with institutions, civil society, organisations, academia, and citizens. Also, in mid-2019, Bosnia–Herzegovina presented a voluntary report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, highlighting examples of positive practices and partnerships in support of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, through the imagined 2030 initiative, citizens across the country have been given the opportunity to jointly create a future. The perspectives helped to shape Bosnia–Herzegovina's vision by 2030 and to develop the country's directions. The integrated analysis of challenges related to the sustainable development in Bosnia–Herzegovina starts with the fact that this is a post-conflict country with aspirations to become a Member of the European Union. The key development trends, opportunities, and obstacles have been identified and the four directions for the sustainable development of Bosnia–Herzegovina are presented, with governance and public sector management, smart growth investments in this new social contract, and human capital for the 21st century.

The four directions of development broadly indicate how sustainable development can be achieved in Bosnia–Herzegovina. The progress can be monitored through 45 adapted sub-objectives and 108 indicators. In addition to identifying these global indicators that are most relevant for Bosnia–Herzegovina, the initial 2015, mid-term 2023 and finally 2030 values for these indicators are proposed, which can be monitored on the basis of data available domestically and from international data sources. This will be of benefit in all strategic planning processes that the institutions of Bosnia–Herzegovina, Republika Srpska, Federation of Bosnia–Herzegovina, and Brčko District will start later this year.

Bosnia–Herzegovina wants to become a Member of the European Union. The EU accession process and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are seen as complementary, mutually reinforcing processes. Both processes encourage the institutions and the citizens to strive for a better society in which no one will be neglected. At the centre of a better common future are people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership.

I regret that we didn't do more and I think we could. That is why I would be grateful if we sent today a message that it is necessary – after more than a year after the Parliamentary Elections were held in Bosnia– Herzegovina – to form the Council of Ministers, the Government of the Federation of Bosnia–Herzegovina and the cantonal governments without any delay and conditions, because without that I am afraid that we will not respond in the best way to the obligations arising from the UN Agenda 2030.

In the end, I want to emphasise that we should all be honoured to be part of the 2030 Agenda and the global family committed to doing something today for future generations.

Thank you for your attention.

Ms Tone WILHELMSEN TRØEN, President, Stortinget, Norway

Time is running out, we only have 11 years left to implement the ambitious UN Sustainable Development Goals. As a politician and a mother, I cannot think of a more important task than to shape a sustainable world for the coming generation. This is why I'm so pleased that the SDG's are on the agenda of this conference.

As MPs we play a vital role, we are responsible for making the laws, setting the budgets and scrutinizing the work of our governments. National parliaments are key to ensuring democratic legitimacy and government accountability. In the case of Norway I would say that the SDGs play a prominent role in policy making. In the government, within the parliament, at a local level and in Civil Society.

The government has appointed a responsible Ministry for each of the 17 SDGs. All Ministries report on how they have followed up these goals in their budget documents. The Ministry of Finance summarizes the main points in the budget, while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs coordinates the international follow-up. At a parliamentary level, the SDGs are present in our daily work through debates, proposals and questions to the government. A large number of MPS also take part in inter-parliamentary work. Here, they help to keep the SDGs high on the agenda of a wide range of different regional and international parliamentary assemblies.

Let me give you one example. SDG number 14, life below water, was one of the main items on the agenda of the Baltic Sea parliamentarian conference that the Norwegian Parliament hosted earlier this autumn. In the Nordic Council the five members, including Norway, have developed a separate strategy for the 2030 SDGs. This contains recommendations on how to follow the map and how to stimulate strong Nordic cooperation and coordination. That said, one thing I believe parliaments can do better, is to foster stronger national and local ownership of the SDGs, not least by encouraging and enabling as many people as possible in our countries to take part in the debates. This is where we, as MPs, can be a strong and positive force.

I was therefore deeply upset by the many comments made by state leaders, politicians and adults in general, following Greta Thunberg's speech in the UN last month. That was not a positive contribution to an inclusive debate, on the contrary, it had completely the reverse effect. We have a serious democratic problem when adults in general, and political leaders in particular, spend more energy harassing and discrediting young people who take a stand in the public discourse than discussing the issues themselves. As MPs we should lead the way and support our young people when they speak out and get involved.

This is why I am proud to say that, after the massive climate demonstrations by children and young people this spring, we invited them in. And for the first time we included young people in a public hearing. In fact, their ideas also led to two private members motions in Parliament. We should be grateful that children and young people speak out and demand action. Their interest and efforts are of the utmost importance, for now and for the future. We will not succeed without them.

Thank you.

Mr Albert FRICK, President, Landtag, Liechtenstein

2019 is a special year for both the Council of Europe and the principality of Liechtenstein. While the Council of Europe can celebrate its 70th anniversary, my country celebrates 300 years of existence. Both anniversaries are an opportunity to look back, but also to reflect upon our common challenges in the future. Sustainable development is the key issue of our time, I'm convinced that global sustainable development cannot be achieved without multilateral cooperation. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development back in 2015 was, therefore, a landmark resolution by the United Nations.

All states, international and regional organisations are urged to seek an appropriate balance between economic development, social cohesion and the protection of natural resources. This is a major challenge for all of us. Every state has to define its strategies and priorities. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is not

only a task for governments, private actors and civil society but, most importantly, parliaments also have a crucial role to play. It is in the hands of parliament to discuss and decide about legislation, strategies and direction and to provide the necessary budget for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

During its October session, the Liechtenstein Parliament had a general debate on sustainable development. I was overwhelmed by the broad support for the topic by all speakers, regardless of party affiliation. General debates are helpful, but we need measures. So, what can parliaments do?

First and foremost, parliaments should ensure that all legislation they adopt creates an enabling environment for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Enabling environments are closely linked to the protection and promotion of human rights, as well as the rule of law. These are preconditions for sustainable development. The Liechtenstein Parliament has proven to be highly committed to human rights. In 2016, for example, it adopted legislation for the establishment of an independent national human rights institution. The parliament also decided to provide sufficient financial means for this institution.

Parliaments do not necessarily have a purely national focus, they can also influence the priorities of their governments' foreign policy. The Liechtenstein Parliament discussed the foreign policy priorities of the government in spring 2019. There is no doubt that Liechtenstein continues to advocate for stronger bilateral and multilateral partnerships, to promote human rights and the rule of law. Parliaments can also support developing countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda by providing financial means for official development assistance to their governments. In Liechtenstein, this is our primary foreign policy instrument, with which we make a substantial contribution to the global achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

I would also like to thank the government of Liechtenstein for having presented its first voluntary national review on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in July 2019. The report has been very helpful for the work of the parliament; it provides comprehensive information on sustainable development and includes all available statistical indicators.

President, dear colleagues, creating a conducive environment to truly achieve sustainable development should be at the top of the agenda of our parliaments. We should all continue to strengthen fundamental freedoms and rights of all human beings, democratic institutions and the rule of law. We should do this both at the national and at the international level.

I thank you.

Ms Maja GOJKOVIĆ, President, Narodna Skupština, Serbia

I am very pleased we are discussing this important global topic today. We are certain that the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals is of vital interest for our citizens. The National Assembly and its members will be fully committed to monitoring the implementation of these goals and their further promotion.

I would like to inform you that the National Assembly is one of the first parliaments in the world that implemented self-assessment toolkit introduced by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and in June this year achieved results have been evaluated. We believe that self-evaluation is an important process and that it provides guidelines for the implementation of sustainable development in Serbia. I would like to recommend all parliaments to use the IPU handbook "Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals" as the National Assembly of Serbia did, as it will make their efforts in this field considerably easier.

The National Assembly has set up a Focus Group for the development of control mechanisms for the process of implementation of Sustainable Development Goals. The Group includes 13 Members of Parliament from several parliamentary groups, both from ruling and opposition parties. Among those are two Vice-Speakers of Parliament and four Committee Chairpersons under whose scope of work most of the Sustainable Development Goals fall and our Secretary-General. It comprises also three Chairpersons of most important informal groups that are particularly dealing with certain issues such as environmental protection, gender equality and fight against corruption.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We were working further on raising MPs awareness on the importance of SDGs and on preparing special bodies of the National Assembly, namely, the Committees that will perform SDG implementation oversight. We would like those committees that address particular issues on a daily basis and have direct contact with line ministries, to be in charge of the oversight. So far, ten relevant committees have considered their role in performing oversight over the process of attaining sustainable development. In the coming period, we will work on further coordination and getting the oversight instruments fully up and running. Our goal is to provide opportunity to the responsible committees to monitor to what extent are ministries being efficient in this regard.

Near the end of last year, during the deliberations on the 2019 Budget Act, Budget System Act and other laws, Members of Parliaments, with the assistance of experts, have prepared a great number of amendments. These amendments were aimed at envisaging more means for the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals. We believe that this was the starting point in these field and we are expecting further progress in this regard.

The fact that the National Assembly has made progress in this field has been recognised as an example of good practice globally. The IPU has assessed our results as good and relevant, and that they could be used as an example to other parliaments.

With that in mind, I am very pleased that Belgrade recently hosted 141st IPU Assembly, one of the most-attended sessions in the history of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to underline that when the Inter-ministerial Working Group in charge of the implementation of Agenda 2030 in the Republic of Serbia was set up it was agreed that representatives of the Committee of the National Assembly can take part in the meetings when individual goals are considered. Accordingly, we expect concrete and productive cooperation in this regard. The National Assembly has organised a public hearing on the Report of the Inter-ministerial Working Group before it was presented at the High-Level Political Forum in New York. Also, I would like to underline that our MPs have participated in defining national priorities in reaching sustainable development goals.

In the end, I would like to underscore that we will implement two types of activities in the coming period. On one hand, we have to raise public awareness through the media. For this purpose we have started a blog with the support of the UNDP Serbia, which follows closely the work of our Parliament in the field of Sustainable Development. On the other hand, we are planning to engage in a direct dialogue with citizens in different towns of Serbia where MPs will primarily meet with young people - high school graduates and students - to discuss the importance of sustainable development for their future, as well as with local officials, civil society and the media. We want to hear what are the needs of young people and their ideas on how to make living in Serbia better and tailored to the needs of every young person.

Honourable parliamentarians,

Parliaments play a key role in implementing the UN 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. We all know that 2030 is just around the corner. We have been granted a unique opportunity to make this world a better place. In accordance with our due functions and powers, we can make a major influence upon our governments to implement the Goals in accordance with the needs of our people who gave us the mandate and their trust.

Thank you for your attention.