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General debate: "Promoting cultural pluralism and peace through inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue"

Dear Chair, esteemed colleagues,

With the adoption of the Declaration on Citizenship, Identity and Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in a Globalized World five years ago, the Inter-Parliamentary Union reaffirmed its conviction that a world where different people coexist, where there is an awareness of solidarity, and where the dialogue between civilizations is encouraged, is indeed possible. A world founded on mutual understanding and acceptance is a source of progress for mankind and leads to the welfare of our global community.

The world today is closely interconnected. Thus, the decision to dedicate this conference to the promotion of cultural pluralism and peace through inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue is a logical continuation of the hitherto efforts of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that all people are born free and equal in rights.

The numerous crisis situations in the world – Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar, Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Burundi, Sudan and others – as well as the many conflicts, interventions, terrorism acts at the hands of both the West and the East, the North and the South, which we have been witnessing increasingly often, confirm today, more than ever, the importance of the Declaration and call for its reconsideration.

Slovenia governs the numerous advantages of inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue in the society by its Constitution and laws. The right of every individual to freely express their religious and other convictions in the private and public spheres is guaranteed by the Constitution. In Slovenia, constitutional protection is also enjoyed by entirely informal, non-registered religious communities. Specific relations in the area of religion are further regulated by the Freedom of Religion Act.

The Constitution also provides for the principle of the separation of the State and religious communities and for the principle of free pursuit of activities and the equality of religious communities in Slovenia.

At present, there are 50 religious communities registered in Slovenia, which has a population of 2 million. According to the Freedom of Religion Act, the freedom of religion is inviolable and guaranteed, while any incitement to religious discrimination, the inflaming of religious hatred, and intolerance are prohibited.

The state even provides direct funding for registered churches and religious communities in the form of payment of social security contributions for religious officials.

As regards the preservation, vitality and development of minority cultures, Slovenia focuses primarily on meeting the special needs of diverse minority groups. After all, understanding and mutual acceptance among the nations feature in the poem of Slovenia's greatest poet which, today, is also the national anthem of Slovenia.

Slovenia seeks to actively involve minority ethnic communities, also by promoting equal opportunities and active participation and improving employability through a number of measures and funding programs. In this way, Slovenia strives to ensure the conditions for the cultural activity of minority communities and actively supports the integration of members of the socially vulnerable groups so that they can acquire competences for greater social inclusion. The measures also contribute to overcoming the negative stigma and stereotypes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As members of parliament, setting an example with our actions as legislators and representatives of the people, we must defend the equality of the rights and freedoms of all and strive to overcome the inter-faith and inter-ethnic conflicts by promoting dialogue and various solidarity policies.

In the pursuit of such a society, parliaments should integrate and enhance the involvement of citizens in the democratic processes, while aiming to achieve equality between people, groups, and nations.

Indeed, there is a lot of work ahead of us. Today's debate is therefore an opportunity to take a step forward to bridging the cultural divide between us.

Thank you.