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*“PLACING DEMOCRACY AT THE SERVICE OF PEACE AND  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING THE WORLD THE  
PEOPLE WANT”*

**Address**

**by**

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Madam Chair!

Your Excellencies!

Dear parliamentarians!

When looking at our world today, there is some progress in development. Much has been done to reduce poverty and to increase access to education.

Yet, today a global peace is at its lowest since 2008. Almost 60 million people have been displaced by conflicts. And this number has risen by almost 60% in the past decade.

War has become daily reality in many places for many people. As we gather here, the brutality of terrorists in Syria and Iraq shocks us all. More than 15 million people have been displaced. Many are forced to take risky and fatal journeys to safety. The crisis related to mass migration and cruel terrorist attacks are the tip of the iceberg of problems that have wider roots.

What we see in Ukraine is a clear and gross violation of international norms and rules by the Russian Federation. Here are the facts - supply and flow of heavy weaponry, financial aid and logistical support to

proxies, and the presence of units of the Russian armed forces, 7000 dead - and this is only the official count. Due to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea many Crimean Tatars have fled their homes in Crimea.

Russia's aggression in Ukraine undermines the system of international law, which has been developed over 70 years. It is in the interest of every member of the international community that we return to implementation of the rules based system. International organizations must encourage the implementation of the Minsk agreements by all sides, especially Russia.

Dear parliamentarians!

We live in a dangerous world. What can be done? The best way is to mobilize the international community's efforts to address all the challenges more effectively. The world needs to be oriented in one direction to attain sustainable development. It will also strengthen global peace and freedom.

In one month, the world leaders will adopt the sustainable development goals targeting the year 2030. The post-2015 commitments will guide the fight against poverty and inequality. We are proud that Latvia as the EU Presidency in the first half of 2015 actively stimulated the negotiations towards reaching this historical agreement.

Speaking on the post-2015 commitments, I would like to stress two areas that Latvia finds highly relevant – the rule of law and good governance, and gender equality. The new goals call for action to “build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions”. Now, more than ever, Latvia stands ready to support our partners in the Europe's Eastern neighbourhood in bringing democratic values and human rights forward.

In our bilateral development assistance, we will continue to focus on Ukraine in supporting good governance, strengthen its administrative capacity and anti-corruption reforms, and foster economic growth. We

believe that this is the best way to help Ukraine in its efforts to reform the country.

Another Latvia's priority in the post-2015 agenda is gender equality. We have to redouble efforts to end discrimination against women and make gender equality a reality.

Madam Chair,

The post-2015 commitments should be fully implemented to truly improve the lives of millions of people. This is also where the parliamentary role is prominent. The national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union as their world organization – have a critical part to play in implementing the new sustainable development goals. The Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations should continue expanding their cooperation.

Our efforts can be fruitful only with the national ownership and true leadership. As parliaments – the representatives elected by the people for the people – it is our duty to design the national policy frameworks to adopt budgets and to ensure accountability in line with the post-2015 commitments.

Therefore a legal framework needs to be put into place. Creation of special parliamentary committees is necessary to oversee implementation of the sustainable development goals.

The serious challenges the world is facing today will only be solved if we – the parliaments– take a political leadership.