

Speech delivered by
Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly
H.E. Mr. László Kövér
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Distinguished Fellow Speakers, Distinguished Secretary General, Dear Ladies and Gentlemen!

„We live in extraordinary times.” – it is with these words the draft joint declaration of our world conference begins.

The accuracy of this sentence stems from the fact that, - perhaps for the first time in history –every country, every nation of the world is directly experiencing that in the same way as the order of nature cannot be sustained without social order, so social order cannot be sustained without the order of nature.

Arthur Schopenhauer, the 19th century German philosopher said „health is not everything, but without health everything is nothing.” Paraphrasing his words, in the 21st century we have every reason to say: the natural and social order providing the framework for human civilization may not be not everything, but without this order everything becomes nothing, i.e. everything becomes uninhabitable and unlivable.

We, the politicians, parliaments and governments of this world all share a responsibility in maintaining this natural and social order. Our shares of responsibility, however, are not equal. The responsibility of the different countries for the world we all live in is directly proportionate to their strength, influence and power.

States are the primary institutions of social order. Those who – abusing their superiority in power – destroy a state for their own – presumed or real – unilateral advantage, hypocritically invoking human rights or God's will, - doing so either in the name of democracy or that of dictatorship – drive societies into chaos, drive humankind into chaos, and commit a major offence against the order of nature as well.

Human responsibility is the main pillar on which the order of nature rests. Responsibility for ourselves, for our ancestors and for our children stems from human morality. Those who corrupt human morality corrupt our natural environment at the same time. Communities will only be cohesive if they rely on morality and observe the justice that is derived from morality. This also applies to states. In the absence of this justice rooted in moral values – as Saint Augustine said – states are but “gangs of criminals” both ripping off their subjects and irresponsibly exhausting the natural resources they manage to extend the rule over.

We, representatives of the institutions with the strongest democratic authorization in the world, i.e. national parliaments, are obligated to take action against any power attempting to corrupt the natural or social order.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen!

The principle of sustainability could be a suitable political agenda whereby we could integrally manage the serious challenges the nations of our world must face today. For this reason, the adoption of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals may rightly expect global public attention.

From the very beginning, Hungary has been an active participant in formulating the sustainable development goals, and my country also had the privilege to delegate the co-chair to the Open Working Group commissioned to draw up these goals.

Sustainability is as important as development. In this field, the wrong compromises will have tragic consequences.

Sustainability does not only mean a lifestyle respecting the ecological boundaries of Planet Earth – it also means the preservation of our national resources, and of the human, social and economic foundations on which our societies rest. This means first and foremost the stability of demographic processes, respect for the sovereignty of the state, the continuous improvement of education, reducing social exclusion, managing state debt, stabilizing our systems of social security and it also means good governance.

Most of today's global crises are largely attributable to the lack of sustainability. We are witnessing, among other things, a new Migration Age, and while the phenomenon is unprecedented in its dimensions, we should remember that old and new types of crises have both triggered it.

Thus, beyond the fact that our draft declaration rightly calls on recipient countries to shoulder their general responsibilities concerning migration, in this context we must also focus our attention on other factors. First, on the responsibilities of the countries where migrants are coming from, second, on the responsibilities of the countries that caused the crisis which has eventually triggered the emigration wave, and third, on the responsibility of criminal gangs and political groups profiting from the migration. Accepting migrants without restrictions has sustainability-related and institutional limitations in destination countries. Disregarding these limitations will undoubtedly cause unprecedented chaos and serious conflicts in these destination countries as well.

Without a satisfactory system of sustainability institutions, reaching the Sustainable Development Goals remains an illusion.

Hungary's new Constitution adopted in 2011 stipulates our country's obligation to participate in international cooperation on sustainable development, and proclaims the necessity of representing the interests of future generations. The Constitution also

imposes a requirement to protect and preserve natural resources and cultural assets – the nation’s shared heritage. The steps to be taken for sustainability are recorded in a national framework strategy, the implementation of which is overseen by the National Assembly with the help of the National Sustainability Council – a consultative interest reconciliation body established by Parliament. Thus, it is fair to conclude that in Hungary, the nation's parliament is at the center of the political institutions for sustainability.

I very much agree with the IPU’s Hanoi Declaration when it emphasizes that „international commitments can only be met with strong political will, leadership and national ownership”. The sentence emphasizes the inescapable responsibility borne by the leaders and political elite of the different countries. But it also underlines that when national decision-making levels are sidelined and national capacities to act are restricted – a noticeable endeavor on the part of certain international organizations and supra-national power centers - , all international cooperation is doomed to fail.

I trust that the Sustainable Development Goals will be successfully implemented. As we speak of long-term goals, may I wish all of us the perseverance and dedication quite until the point when we will have accomplished our goals.