

*Speech by Mrs Loreta Graužinienė
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**at the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament
General debate: Placing Democracy at the Service of Peace and
Sustainable Development: Building the World the People Want**

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Mr Chair, Colleagues,

Today's debate is very important for us, speakers of national parliaments, because parliaments are the foundation and guarantee of democracy in democratic countries.

The democratic peace theory says that democracies do not go to war with each other. Therefore we, Lithuania, with more than half a century of experience of occupation and authoritarian regime, greatly cherish our freedom and the fact of belonging to the family of democratic states for 25 years and we want to see democratic states around us.

All military conflicts are painful and result in human casualties. At first, we pay particular attention to each case, and later we put less emphasis on these matters until they are almost forgotten despite the fact that, in most cases, the situation continues to deteriorate. Allow me to remind you about one of such cases, that is Ukraine.

More than a year ago, the media reported on violence in Eastern Ukraine and on each shot fired there. One of the shots (on 17 July 2014) was particularly tragic, killing 298 people. It is very sad and shameful that one of the permanent members of the Security Council vetoed the resolution on establishing an international tribunal for the purpose of prosecuting the perpetrators of the downing of flight MH17.

Unfortunately, shooting has intensified since last summer, which has already claimed nearly 7 000 lives, including 4 000 civilians, and more than 16 000 people have been injured. As many as one and a half million of internally displaced persons moved from the war-affected areas to other regions in Ukraine and nearly a million of such people moved abroad. The majority of refugees are women. They suffer most from violence, abuse, exploitation, psychological and physical traumas, and difficult social conditions. They fall victim to human trafficking.

I want to express my respect to brave Ukrainian women who I was privileged to meet in Kiev in the autumn chill of 2013. They made up about a half of protesters in Maidan. They provided emergency aid and psychological assistance, cooked meals, collected and disseminated information, kept watch at the barricades, and stood in active defence of human rights.

They were also united by the idea that Maidan was an opportunity for Ukraine to become a more open, transparent and free country. Their efforts have not been in vain — the new Ukrainian parliament has a record number of women and young people.

The country has chosen the democratic path and strives for peace.

Lithuania supports Ukraine and helps it. Lithuania provides multifaceted support, accepts refugee children from Eastern Ukraine for schooling and offers asylum to Ukrainian families.

Another deep concern is the continuously deteriorating situation of human rights in the illegally annexed Crimea. There is persecution and intimidation of ethnic minorities — ethnic Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars, restrictions on their freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion or belief, and freedom of movement, and violations of property rights and the right to study in their mother tongue.

The international community and institutions, the United Nations in particular, must support Ukraine's aspirations to freedom and its right to self-determination in following the European path.

Lithuania, as a member of the United Nations Security Council, calls for attention to peace and democracy issues worldwide seeking to contribute to positive changes.

We invite each and every one to do all in our power to ensure democracy and peace throughout the world. A safe and dignified life in a democracy is what our citizens want.

Let's treasure and protect our planet. Let's learn to live without wars and aggression. Let all the nations of the world live in peace, and thus all the people on the planet will be happy creating their lives.

Thank you for your attention.