

20 November 2007

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Srgjan Kerim,
President of the 62nd Session of the General Assembly,
at the 2007 Parliamentary Hearing “Reinforcing the Rule of Law in
International Relations: The Key Role of Parliaments”**

Mr. President,
Secretary-General,
Honourable Members of Parliaments,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct pleasure to address you today at the 2007 Parliamentary Hearing. I am very pleased to see such a high level of participation from all parts of the world.

This is the first time the hearing is being held as a joint UN-IPU event, sending a clear political signal that the United Nations is committed to working closely with parliamentarians. The Inter-Parliamentary Union - a Permanent Observer of the General Assembly - has played a key role in fostering closer cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments.

Today, you have an important opportunity to develop a better understanding of the United Nations and the type of multilateralism this organisation advocates. We need to have a common approach in order to ensure greater and more consistent support by parliaments for the work of the United Nations.

You are powerful opinion formers; and, are increasingly shaping international decisions. Your support is essential to promote more effective international relations based on the rule of law.

Enhancing United Nations cooperation with legislators is crucial to strengthening international policy and ensuring better compliance and implementation of international commitments.

I read with interest a recent IPU policy paper on United Nations Affairs. It describes how parliaments contribute to achieving the MDG-s by participating actively in national poverty reduction strategies, ensuring they are properly financed and monitoring implementation.

That is why I intend to invite parliamentarians to participate in important General Assembly debates on climate change and the Millennium Development Goals.

Excellencies,

The theme of this year's hearing – Reinforcing the Rule of Law in International Relations – is at the very core of the activities of the United Nations, and integral to promoting and protecting the values and principles of the Charter; human rights, peace and security and development.

The rule of law is a basic human right that forms the bedrock of societies by guaranteeing the well-being, freedom and dignity of all of its members.

On the eve of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is appropriate to recall the provisions of this seminal document:

“it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law”.

This phrase encapsulates the basic values of juridical codes that provide rights and responsibilities to both the state and the individual.

If these values are expanded to the international level one can say that the foundation of a well-functioning society of nation-states depends upon each demonstrating mutual respect for the rights and sovereignty of the others. However, we now rightly recognise our responsibility to protect behind borders where there are crimes against humanity.

In these times of global change and interdependence the increasing complexity of politics, economics and societies is putting a strain on these values and testing our commitment to them.

The incidence of asymmetrical conflicts – conflicts between states and non-state actors – is increasing.

The threat of global terrorism, fuelled by different objectives is not receding.

Capital flows are becoming more complex, volatile and opaque.

Climate change and its global affects will impact us all but a binding legal solution is some time away.

Given the indivisible nature of these challenges, we must ensure that the global architecture that we have in place has the right tools to encourage appropriate agreement, action and regulation.

Collectively and in the spirit of cooperation necessary to confront the challenges of our times, we need to have the courage to rise above our own self interest in pursuit of common goals that can benefit us all.

Excellencies,

The United Nations was founded on the idea of a rules-based international order. Its creation represented the burning hope of a generation for a better world after the ashes of the 2nd World War: to end wars between nations by replacing bombs and bullets with cooperation and compromise.

In facing up to the challenges of their times, world leaders gave expression to a new public purpose based on high ideal in the conviction that international cooperation and law was the best way to resolve the economic and political challenges facing the world.

In the founding Charter of this Organization, Member States resolved:

“...to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained”.

During the past decades Member States have demonstrated their commitment to translate these principles into functioning international mechanisms.

The heavy caseload of the International Court of Justice, a principal organ of the United Nations, is evidence of Member States conviction to solve their disputes peacefully pursuant to international rules.

Institutions such as the International Criminal Court, in The Hague, have been set up to complement the enforcement of international law.

I recently met the President of the International Criminal Court. I was very encouraged by the commitment of the Court uphold and protect international law, in particular its work to restore the rule of law in war torn societies.

The Court has responded to the call for greater international accountability by taking actions that will deter future crimes against humanity and by moving to end impunity from international justice.

To advance this agenda the Court requires further support from Member States.

Excellencies,

We need to continue to show similar courage and foresight as the founders of our great institutions did over 60 years ago in order creatively address the challenges the world is facing today.

By living up to the values and principles of the United Nations founding Charter – based on international law and multilateral cooperation – we can promote human rights, human security, sustainable development and protect the overall well-being of humanity.

Through our commitment to these values and principles we have the opportunity to forge a new culture of international relations: where human security is not inherently less important than national security. And, we can achieve this by each of us recognizing our shared responsibilities.

I wish you all every successful as you discuss how to advance these issues.

Upon your return to your home countries, I encourage you to brief your colleagues, as well as your constituencies on your deliberations and the activities of the United Nations. We need more advocates to champion the virtues of multilateralism, and make the case for a global partnership to advance the rule of law.

We must strive to achieve our highest possible human potential and reflect this in our system of international relations and cooperation based on the rule of law.

Respect for the rule of law is the cornerstone of peaceful relations among nations. By adhering to it and promoting it the conditions for lasting peace, and prosperity can be created.

Thank you for your attention.