

ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA



ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA, H.E. TALAT XHAFERI AT THE 137TH IPU ASSEMBLY

PROMOTING CULTURAL PLURALISM AND PEACE THROUGH INTER-FAITH AND INTER-ETHNIC DIALOGUE

Distinguished Chairman,

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Planet Earth persists and is pretty, above all, due to the natural biodiversity. I personally believe that the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, in other words, differences that create and move the human civilization, are of equal importance for the survivor of the Planet. It is a fact that today's civilization development in all areas, from technology to art is based on the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. This is especially important today when we witness the processes of globalization which further demonstrate inter connectivity, as well as dependence on the various cultures, ethnicities or religions. This inter – connectivity is demonstrated through various forms. Nevertheless, unfortunately, we face a particular contradiction in this aspect. On one hand, the respect of the cultural, ethnic, linguistic or religious diversity and the overall inclusiveness thereof leads to development and welfare of each society, state, regionally or globally. On the other hand, we witness that this cultural, ethnic or religious diversity cause intolerance, xenophobia and various forms of extremism, focused to the others, the different. I do not need to underline that all of this jeopardizes the peace which is an indivisible category. I believe that the reason for the clash between the different civilizations should not be seek in the cultural, ethnic, linguistic or religious differences, but in the absence of dialogue among them. In the same time, the

respect of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity and creating conditions for their development, are part of the general human rights and freedoms, in other words principles and standards embedded in many international acts and documents; starting with the UN Charter, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and so on. These international documents become part of the national legal system of the Member States of UN once they are ratified. That is why, our Association has debated this topic, and numerous documents and declarations that refer to this topic have been adopted, among which is the Declaration from the IPU Assembly in Quebec in 2012. As I have mentioned the primary mechanism to surpass the possible misunderstandings or appearance of intolerance, xenophobia and extremism should be the dialogue, and the location for resolution of the problems are above all the parliament, considering its three primary functions: legislative, representative and oversight.

Distinguished friends,

My state, the Republic of Macedonia today builds a true multicultural, multiethnic and multiconfessional society where the inclusiveness of the differences creates economic, social and cultural development of each individual and each ethnic community. In 2001 we were at the edge of a civil war between the biggest ethnic communities and with the assistance of our international friends and through dialogue, we managed to avoid larger war clashes, which could have tragic consequences for all citizens. Let us not forget that in our region, known as Western Balkan, the intolerance and attempts to impose exclusivity of one ethnic community over the other, of one culture over the other, as well as spreading the religious impatience, led to big war clashes after the dissolution of former Yugoslavia, inflicting wounds that are painful even today. Let me clarify, the exclusiveness, and the, mildly said, intolerance to the other, the different, was not connected to a particular ethnic community, rather to political elites. Still, I am convinced that all of us, as states and as region learned that diversity, cultural, ethnic, linguistic or religious should be respected. Overall inclusiveness is needed if we are willing to provide stability and development of each state and the region in general. In this context, Macedonia organized several international conferences dedicated to the dialogue among religions and civilizations in the past decade, actively contributing to the stability of the region and beyond.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This does not mean that we have done our homework. Namely the migrant crisis caused by the war clashes in the Near East and the activities of the so called Islamic State, are serious challenges that nourish intolerance, xenophobia and extremism. Now is the time when the dialogue and cooperation are needed the most, so that we can successfully face these challenges. All national and international institutions must be included if we truly want to be successful in dealing with these challenges, respecting the principles and standards of the human rights and freedoms.

Distinguished friends,

Let us not forget that we belong to different religions, we have different skin colour, we speak different languages and have different culture, but essentially we belong to the single human race.

Thank you!