

**Address by the President of the Senate of Italy,
Sen. Pietro GRASSO,
to the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament**

New York, 2 September, 2015

Dear colleagues,

The 2000 Millennium Development Goals have proven to be a formidable vehicle for constructing a jointly-agreed development agenda for all United Nations member states, through down goals, commitments and common political responsibilities. In terms of substance, the agenda reflected a world where poverty was concentrated in less developed countries and it was focused on the social dimension of development in order to protect the most vulnerable sectors of the population, with a particular emphasis on health care and education.

Many factors have made the world in 2015 radically different from what it was in 2000, a world defined by new players: non-OECD countries and the private sector, principally; new forms of poverty, which are on the rise in middle-income countries; deteriorating security and the damage caused by climate change; an increasingly uncertain international situation as the result of the combined effects of financial, economic, social and geopolitical crises, and the worrying increase in inequality and marginalisation, even in the most affluent countries of the planet. We must therefore commit ourselves to new, complex and diversified directions. Greater resolve is needed to ensure full employment and decent working conditions for all, without discrimination, in order to achieve real equality and freedom for our people. Environmental issues can no longer be relegated to the sidelines of the development models, as if damage to the environment and to human health were an unavoidable and acceptable price to pay. The new agenda must pursue economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability, at one and the same time. I am therefore convinced that the challenge we face is to clearly identify the overall priorities, while preventing fragmentation and the proliferation of goals from causing us to miss the strategic significance of the new agenda. Designing a comprehensive development agenda setting out commonly-agreed responses to the problems of every country,

through a global approach, is one way of superseding the top-down approach for which the Millennium Goals were sometimes criticised. We must not, however, forget that the territory where we operate is crucially important: we must gear development policies to specific local situations.

In conclusion, I would like to recall that, especially at times of crisis, it is precisely the Parliaments which perform a strategic function of combating poverty and fostering development. Parliaments must back up their essential duties as monitors of the work of the international community and governments, and as overseers of national implementation of common agendas, with actions to raise public awareness and bolster the support of public opinion for these issues. Democracy, development and substantive equality are intertwined. To paraphrase the fine words enshrined in the Italian Constitution, our task is to remove the economic and social obstacles that restrict the freedom and equality of our citizens and prevent them from achieving human development and the effective participation by all in the political and social life of each country.

It has been precisely to enhance Italy's participation in this overall plan, that new development assistance legislation was enacted in 2014 and new instruments were adopted to underpin the long-term peace and prosperity of our partner countries, in the belief that cooperation policy is a tangible way of fostering development and ensuring stability. Italy's development assistance system is based on a participatory approach and jointly involves central and local government, the private sector, civil society, non-governmental organisations, universities and research establishments, foundations, cooperatives, and migrants' communities. Overall political control is vested into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Assistance. Development assistance therefore is part and parcel of Italy's foreign policy.

Dear colleagues, the goals we have set ourselves are ambitious, and the path ahead will be a difficult one. But I can assure you that the Italian Parliament will strive on to safeguard the rights of the weakest and less fortunate, wherever they may be. This is the greatest responsibility we are being called upon to undertake, having taken on the supreme duty of representing our citizens and

democracy – a duty which I am certain meets with the full support of each and every one of us here today. Thank you.