

**SPEECH OF THE SPEAKER OF THE HELLENIC PARLIAMENT
Mr. PHILIPPOS PETSALNIKOS AT THE WORLD
CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT OF THE
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (GENEVA 19-21 JULY 2010)**

Mr. Secretary General of the United Nations,
Mr. President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Mr. Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Dear colleagues Speakers of Parliaments,
Ambassadors,
Distinguished guests and observers,

Over the last years, the international financial crisis, social inequalities, poverty, climatic change and terrorism have increased the feeling of insecurity of citizens and their concern for the future.

They have also shaken the credibility of democratic institutions, among which Parliament holds a conspicuous position.

How can we restore citizens' trust in politicians and in the paramount democratic institution, the Parliament?

I believe it is imperative for us to listen to the voice of citizens, to focus on the needs of society, to restore value to the principles of parliamentarism- popular sovereignty and collective will.

We must prove that both MPs and Parliaments are not isolated from reality but are part of it.

We must make Parliament known as a place of substantial consultation, dialogue and constructive exchange of opinions for a more effective tackling of people's problems.

We must improve the functionality of Parliament, and pursue its modernization and upgrading by ensuring full transparency and by opening it up to citizens, to criticism, to control. It is necessary to build a crystal-clear, transparent system for all and for everything.

In particular, it is necessary on the one hand to ensure the quality of the legislative work produced and on the other hand to strengthen responsibility and social accountability.

Quality is ensured, among others, by the participation of citizens and agencies to the legislative process through public consultation carried out prior to the completion of the legislative initiative. Public consultation involves citizens in shaping regulations. Furthermore, the drafting and submission of a report assessing the impact of the proposed regulation further contributes to the upgrading of the legislative work produced.

Transparency has an important role in strengthening responsibility and social accountability. This objective is served by generalized publicity of sessions, constant information of citizens via the internet on anything that happens within Parliament, meritocracy everywhere, respect of the rights of the minority. Just as important is the keeping of the spirit and the substance of parliamentary control over the executive power. This control must be direct and substantial, it must ensure polyphony, confirm freedom of speech, enhance the role and the mission of parliamentarians.

The consolidation of the above mentioned values in the operation of Parliament turns citizens from unconcerned observers and critics to active, strong, creative citizens. Active citizens that trust democratic institutions are those who guarantee and defend democracy, social cohesion, peace and progress.

To this end, we have recently introduced major changes in the Regulation of the Hellenic Parliament.

The present international financial and institutional crisis cannot be overcome by isolated efforts of Parliaments.

The time is right for us to develop a closer cooperation at European and international level, as we try to limit the democratic deficit in terms of citizens' participation to decision-making at supra-national level.

The Treaty of Lisbon has taken steps in this direction by strengthening the role of Europe's Parliaments.

Moreover, the contribution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and of the United Nations to the cultivation of the principles of parliamentarism and to the strengthening of democracy is of decisive importance.

It is our duty to convey the message of respect of democratic values, to develop international democratic accountability responsibility for the common good, to restore citizens' trust.

I hope that our meeting and our discussion will give us ideas as to the way to deepen our parliamentary democracy and will trace the course towards the establishment of a Parliament that will be close to citizens and to society: a dynamic, productive, responsible, democratic Parliament.

The present crucial juncture does not allow us to limit ourselves to expressing wishes but requires that we work collectively towards the attainment of this objective.

Thank you.