

*L-iSpeaker**The Speaker*

Excellencies,
Honourable Speakers and Presidents of Parliament,
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean,
Distinguished delegates,

We meet in Budva at a time when our region does not need polite statements that disappear with the closing of a conference. It needs courage, responsibility and political honesty.

The theme before us — parliamentary diplomacy as a resilience stronghold of democratic institutions — must therefore be treated with the seriousness it deserves. Parliamentary diplomacy is not a ceremonial extension of foreign policy. It is democracy acting beyond its borders. It is the voice of peoples entering the international arena when governments hesitate, when institutions are distrusted, and when silence becomes dangerous.

As Speakers and Presidents of Parliament, we are custodians of the institutions where the people place their trust. If Parliament becomes weak, democracy becomes weak. If democracy becomes weak, peace becomes vulnerable. And if peace becomes vulnerable, every other policy — economic, social, environmental or security-related — begins to fail.

From Malta, at the heart of the Mediterranean, we know this truth well. I have said before, and I repeat here: there can be no peace in Europe without peace in the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean is not Europe's border. It is Europe's partner, its conscience, and one of the great tests of its credibility.

For too long, our sea has been described through crisis: war, migration, trafficking, insecurity, extremism and despair. But the Mediterranean is not condemned to be a theatre of suffering. It must not be allowed to become the graveyard of failed politics. I have said before that the Mediterranean must become the richest sea in peace, not in blood. Today I say that this is no longer a poetic aspiration. It is a political obligation.

Malta's neutrality strengthens this obligation. Neutrality is not passivity. Neutrality is not fear. Neutrality is not silence in the face of injustice. For Malta, neutrality is an active vocation for dialogue, diplomacy and international law. It gives us the freedom to speak for peace without becoming prisoners of blocs, and the duty to speak for human dignity without double standards.

Malta's vocation for peace did not emerge in a vacuum. It was shaped by a clear historical understanding that small states, when guided by principle, can give strength to multilateralism. Under Prime Minister Dom Mintoff, Malta insisted that the Mediterranean could not remain a forgotten margin of European security. That conviction found important expression in the process leading to the 1975 Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, today's OSCE, where the Mediterranean dimension was recognised as inseparable from peace and stability in Europe.

This was not merely a diplomatic footnote. It was a strategic truth stated by a small island with a large sense of responsibility: Europe cannot be secure while the Mediterranean is unstable. The North cannot live in comfort while the South is abandoned. Peace cannot be built by blocs alone, nor by power alone, nor by the arrogance of those who believe that smaller states should only listen and never lead. Malta's message then remains Malta's message today: true multilateralism must listen also to the voices of small states, because peace is built through dialogue, respect, sovereignty, justice and cooperation among nations.

Let us be clear: international law cannot be selective. Humanitarian law cannot apply only when convenient. Civilians, children, refugees and vulnerable persons cannot become collateral damage in diplomatic statements. If we defend democratic institutions, then we must also defend the human beings for whom those institutions exist.

As Chair of the IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, I say plainly: fine words are not enough. Condemnations are not enough. Resolutions are not enough unless they are followed by scrutiny, budgets, legislation, accountability and political courage.

This is where parliaments must rise. We ratify treaties. We approve defence and security budgets. We legislate on migration, trafficking, climate, trade and justice. We question governments. We represent the people who carry the consequences of decisions made in the name of security, strategy or necessity. Therefore, parliaments cannot behave as spectators while the world around them burns.

The agenda before PAM is not a list of technical items. It is a warning. Terrorism and organised crime attack the rule of law. Trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling attack human dignity. Climate change and energy insecurity attack the future of our young people. Children in armed conflict expose the moral failure of the international community. These matters demand more than discussion. They demand resolve.

PAM has a vital role to play, but that role must be ambitious. PAM must be a platform for preventive parliamentary diplomacy, not only reaction after tragedy. It must be a voice for international humanitarian law when others choose ambiguity. It must help build a Mediterranean compact based on peace, security, climate resilience, orderly and humane migration management, economic cooperation and opportunity for young people.

We must move from declarations to responsibility. From concern to consequence. From speeches to measurable action.

Democratic resilience is not proven by the survival of buildings, titles or procedures. It is proven when institutions remain worthy of public trust. A Parliament is strong when it protects debate without hatred, authority without arrogance, and freedom without fear. A Parliament is strong when it refuses to let human dignity become negotiable.

Excellencies,

Let this Summit send a clear message: parliamentary diplomacy is not secondary diplomacy. It is democracy refusing to be silent. It is the conscience of peoples speaking beyond borders. It is one of the instruments we still possess to prevent conflict, restore trust and defend human dignity.

From Malta, I bring a message of neutrality, yes — but neutrality with conviction. Dialogue, yes — but dialogue with principle. Peace, yes — but peace with justice.

If PAM is to stand for the Mediterranean and beyond, it must stand where history is most demanding: against indifference, against selective morality, against the normalisation of war, and against the abandonment of the vulnerable.

That is the duty before us in Budva. Not a duty of protocol, but a duty of conscience. Not a duty for tomorrow, but a responsibility for today.

Thank you.