Prague 8th of October 2019 Christine Muttonen

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The role of Parliaments in supporting disarmament process

Ladies and gentlemen,

In 1914 Bertha von Suttner and Alfred Hermann Fried were busy organizing the 21st International Peace Congress, which was about to meet in Vienna. Everything was prepared. More than 400 high profile guests from all over the world had already announced their coming;

to debate and discuss how war could be prevented, how the arms race could be stopped and how a necessary disarmament could be started.

The 21st International Peace Congress in Vienna never took place. It was planned for September; on the 28th of July the First World War started.

Today, two disastrous world wars later, our world is still far away from being a peaceful place.

The world has become more chaotic, with growing nationalism, growing distrust, with confrontational, conflict orientated policies with an increasing amount of conflicts.

The risk of being caught in a downward spiral of nationalistic rhetoric, mistrust, military deterrence and rearmament is increasing. In addition, we have to find answers to threats and issues like terrorism, human trafficking, drugs- and arm-trafficking, cybercrime, social and economic inequality, migration and refugee movements AND climate change. This situation has even brought about the RETURN of NUCLEAR THINKING.

We need to end and reverse this extremely dangerous development. We have to work again on building a basis for a common security system.

In order to achieve this, we need to keep up and strengthen our existing platforms for dialog and – where necessary - even create new ones.

We have to make people aware that the money spent for armament would make much more sense being spent on education and combatting climate change.

We need allies, we need governments, we need civil society and our national and international parliaments.

One outstanding example of cooperation in the fight against nuclear weapons were the three international conferences on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons; organized in Norway, Mexico and Austria.

Governments, Parliamentarians, NGOs, Organizations like the Red Cross, the Red Crescent, ICAN or PNND were partners.

These conferences should increase the awareness and the knowledge about the tragic impacts of any use of nuclear weapons.

The Austrian Parliament in cooperation with PNND - the International Parliamentarians` Network for Nonproliferation and Nuclear Disarmament - supported the Vienna conference by inviting parliamentarians from all over the world.

As a result Austria invited other states to sign the so-called “Humanitarian Pledge”, which in the end was adopted by the United Nation`s General Assembly in form of a resolution.

This finally led to negotiations of the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons which was passed by in the General Assembly of the UN in July 2017.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have to show alternatives to military build ups and nuclear deterrence.

We have to strengthen the existing Nuclear Weapons Free Zones.

As I already mentioned, Parliaments are important, because:Parliaments can make a difference! We have seen quite a few examples during the last year.

Parliaments and Parliamentarians can play a crucial part in the process of starting negotiations, stigmatizing and reducing (nuclear) weapons. They can influence government positions. For example, they could simply refuse their consent to make the necessary money for new arms available.

Parliaments can help to raise and to maintain awareness.

Parliamentarians should connect, exchange experiences and best practices and discuss the possibility of joint action.

Interparliamentary dialog between elected representatives can help foster a better understanding of the “other” and lead to an easing of tensions.

The settings of the inter-parliamentarian Assemblies, such as the OSCE PA, the IPU, the NATO PA, the Commonwealth of Independent states and others….. are much more informal than the meetings of the governmental branch.

They are a good place for first contacts and trial balloons. Also, their discussions are not bound by diplomatic rules or consensus – they are more open and vivid.

Parliamentarians bring together ideas, perspectives and knowhow from different member states and from a huge variety of political, cultural and religious back ground.

This happens for example in the PA of the OSCE.

Dialogue and confidence building are a permanent point on top of the agenda.

In the sessions and annual conferences discussions about security, especially about nuclear disarmament took and take place.

Amendments and declarations were adopted to call on states to increase disarmament and confidence building measures; to promote mediation as “cost- effective ways of preventing, managing and resolving violent conflicts” including structured dialogues; to support the humanitarian pledge; to support no-first use of nuclear weapons,

And PNND (the cross- party network of parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament) is always present with own side-events, informing parliamentarians and widening the network against nuclear armament. PNND is of great support and help in the disarmament process.

The Interparliamentary Union IPU is another important global organization. The founding of this organization goes back to Bertha von Suttner`s initiative. She was already then thinking of a kind of world parliament.

In cooperation with PNND a handbook was published and distributed to all parliaments. It provides a background and information about various aspects of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

In May last year ( 2018) a strong signal came from Women Legislators who supported the Secretary General`s New Disarmament Agenda. The appeal, “Common Security for a Sustainable and Nuclear-Free World” was released on *Women`s International Day for Peace and Disarmament.*

So Parliamentarians can take a range of actions. And they can be very creative, e.g.

cut funding, prohibit nuclear weapons in their counties by law, support the idea of nuclear weapon free zones. They can talk to their governments, cities, pension funds, banks to disinvest from arms manufacturers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

our strength is dialogue, our strength is to raise awareness and to create the appropriate political pressure - for the security for all of us.

Deterrence through military armament or even nuclear weapons is only an illusion. An illusion to make the world safer.

Reality has proved the opposite - they make the world much less secure!

And already Bertha von Suttner knew it.