



PARLIAMENTARY FORUM
FOR DEMOCRACY



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PRESS RELEASE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE RESTORATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF LITHUANIA PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD DISCUSSED THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY AROUND THE GLOBE

On Tuesday March 10, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the restoration of independence of Lithuania International Parliamentary Meeting *State of Democracy around the Globe: Current Challenges and Future Prospects* was held at the Seimas. The event was organized by the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy. The participants were greeted by the Speaker of the Seimas **Loreta Graužinienė**: „Freedom became more powerful than fear of coercion or death. That is the victory of our nation. „

Trying to evaluate the factors of success in the process of the reestablishment of independence of Lithuania at the meeting, it was noted, that today's democracy and attempts to nourish democratic values are faced by more and more challenges. The participants discussed the lessons learned through experiences in the past, current challenges and threats to democracy in the global world.

Emanuelis Zingeris, President of the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy, said that we have gathered here during turbulent and critical times when we are facing Russian invasion of Ukraine caused not so much by geopolitical reasons, but rather by a new way of life chosen by the Ukrainian people. The politician stressed that the block of countries led by Russia is opposing the main idea of human rights, free and fair elections and freedom of the press. According to Emanuelis Zingeris, the dramatic events of Maidan and elections that followed brought Ukraine to a stage to be visible in the democratic world. The President of the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy suggested that Kiev could be a place for a high-level Community of Democracies Summit in future, especially when Nigeria refused to chair CoD after Salvador during the last CoD Meeting of the Executive Committee in Geneva in March. According to the politician, after the unsuccessful outcome of the Arab Spring, with only one story of success in Tunisia, we, looking from the perspective of the Parliamentary Forum of Democracy, have the other three success stories on the other side of the neighbourhood of the European Union. Unfortunately, their efforts to become part of the Western world and desire to leave the Soviet system are opposed by the current regime in Russia. According to Emanuelis Zingeris, we should double our efforts to promote their higher standards of democracy.

During the first discussion at the meeting, the former and the present road to democracy was discussed as well as the unique historic context of creating democracy, lessons that were learned and the basic factors of successful sustainable democratic development in the future. **Mustafa Jemilev**, the member of the Parliament of Ukraine emphasized similar historical background of Lithuania and Ukraine. Therefore, Lithuania can clearly understand the present situation in Ukraine.

The second discussion was opened by paying tribute to the leader of the opposition of Russia **Boris Nemtsov**. The leader of the movement Russia's Democratic Choice **Vladimir Ryzhkov** noted that

Boris Nemtsov was an outstanding leader and managed to bring large numbers of people together. Other speakers discussed the current alarming trends in the world: from the rebirth of revisionism and indulgence in power games to military actions. In his speech, **Jerzy Pomianowski** noted that support for democracy begins notably with solidarity, when people unanimously work for other people.

The final part of the meeting focused on general projects aimed at promoting and supporting the continuity of the activities of democratic community and at supporting the growing resistance to non-democratic regimes. John Shimkus, a member of the US House of Representatives congratulated Lithuania on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuania's independence and stressed the importance of the unity between countries. At the end of the meeting, the participants of the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy adopted Vilnius Declaration which defines the guidelines and trends for the future international parliamentary cooperation as an attempt to continue supporting the road of democracy and the countries that follow that road.

Among the participant of the parliamentary meeting were speakers from democratic parliaments, Eastern partnership countries to the EU, a member of the Baltic Friends Group of the US House of Representatives, the supporters of Lithuania's strive for freedom, advocates of freedom, the signatories of the Act of Independence of Lithuania and representatives of civil society - **Vytautas Landsbergis**, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, Signatory of the Act of Independence of Lithuania, former Member of the European Parliament, **John Shimkus**, a member of the US House of Representatives, a member of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and the former Minister of Foreign Affairs **Boris Tarasiuk**, the leader of the movement Russia's Democratic Choice **Vladimir Ryzhkov**, a member of the Parliament of Ukraine **Mustafa Jemilev**, the President of the *Freedom House* **Mark P. Lagon** and other participants.

Parliamentary Forum for Democracy was established in March 2010 in Vilnius. During its first meeting to promote democracy, human rights and freedoms members of parliament from 18 countries adopted the Vilnius Declaration, committing themselves "to work together to strengthen democracy where it is weak and invigorate even where it is longstanding."

For more information: <http://www.parliamentary-forum.org/>

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