

Dear Chairman of the Riigikogu, dear Riigikogu,  
My ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear compatriots and friends.

Today, we proudly celebrate the anniversary of the Constituent Assembly and thereby also the anniversary of parliamentarism in independent Estonia.

Let us face the facts of history: We have done rather well when acting by the principles of representative democracy as a state and a nation. We have done rather badly when we have strayed from this path.

Many believe that parliamentarism is a manner of making decisions that is cumbersome, expensive and by no means fast. But so far, there is no mechanism for legislative drafting and creation of the government that would be better, fairer, more reliable and taking account of the interests of as many parties as possible.

Therefore, there is no point in us heading down the paths that we have tried before and that have led us astray. It would be better if we focused on strengthening our parliament and parliamentarism instead.

The parliament of Estonia since the Constituent Assembly has been industrious and effective. The people of Estonia have always demanded a lot from their representatives. Sometimes even more than they demand from themselves.

Every representative of the people cannot, must not and should not be liked by everyone. We have to hang on to our representatives and parliamentary democracy at any cost.

This is the answer to those who are currently asking:

Do we even need the kind of parliament we have today when we have the Internet, when we have educated and motivated people?

It is also the answer to those who condemn the daily arguments of one hundred and one representatives who are paid for this by the people; who would want to decrease the size of the Riigikogu or reduce its role.

When we hear people saying that we need clear and quick decisions instead of the seemingly endless arguments, then I would like to ask back:

Are Estonia and our society tired of democracy?

Do we no longer have to offer different solutions and argue about them?

Or are we already past caring?

Controlling oneself and being responsible for oneself take patience and strength, restraining oneself and understanding the others. As an individual and a citizen and as the state.

We have to accept that as citizens, we have different wishes; we consider different decisions to be right. These different interests must be highlighted in this hall here, as well as in committee discussions.

Asking questions and presenting different viewpoints, arguing, putting the brakes on when everything seems clear without discussion – all this is the primary content of the parliament's work and duties. This is why we have elected these 101 people. This is why taxpayers guarantee economic independence for them.

Understanding and respecting the content of parliamentarism, representative democracy as a whole demands long-term experience of living in freedom. And similarly, the work culture of the parliament needs time to grow and develop.

But this time cannot be endless. We cannot keep hiding behind our difficult childhood and evil past. Even more so because your predecessors, especially the Constituent Assembly 90 years ago, but also the seventh composition of the Riigikogu 16 years ago, are the representatives of people most often characterized by people as true statesmen with a sense of responsibility who worked hard.

We have to respect and acknowledge the hard work done by our predecessors. This is exactly what we are doing today.

But it is wrong and unjustified to spend too much time basking in the glory of our predecessors. We need to strengthen our parliamentarism every day. There is never too much responsibility or statesmanship. This is your job.

My ladies and gentlemen.

A well-functioning civil society that speaks its mind when necessary supports the parliament in a well-functioning democracy. But it will never become an effective alternative or replacement for parliamentary order.

The duties and responsibility of the people's representatives have not gone anywhere. The fact that you do not have to prepare a new constitution in a year or any other basic laws that regulate the functioning of society in a couple of months does not reduce the responsibility of the members of the Riigikogu.

Every time you press the button it has an impact on lives outside this hall. Your responsibility is personalized – it is much more direct than the votes for or against you given in the elections.

This personalized responsibility must be maintained; its share must grow. The Riigikogu reduces its role if this is not done, if members of the parliament keep hiding behind the decisions made in parties or the government. And this marginalization, largely voluntarily selected, is what people do not and cannot agree with.

Good laws have clear goals; they are understandable and easy to follow. A good legislator is not one who gets a draft passed as an act as quickly as possible, but one who understands their responsibility and weighs all arguments carefully.

Maybe the future of parliamentary work in Estonia lies here, in the assessment of all the effects of decisions and in avoiding unwanted consequences.

This is why I wish you, dear Riigikogu, as well as all future people's representatives in Estonia, strength, statesmanship and responsibility.

Thank you.