

UPF Prague, Czech Republic marks the International Day of Parliamentarism

Juraj Lajda
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Prague, Czech Republic -- Two distinguished panelists spoke at a UPF online conference to mark the International Day of Parliamentarism.

At the beginning of the international conference on July 9, 2020, Dr. Juraj Lajda, president of the Czech chapter of UPF, explained the significance of parliaments in the world. Strong parliaments are a cornerstone of democracy, he said. They represent the voice of the people, pass laws, allocate funds to implement laws and policies and hold governments to account, he said.

The first speaker, Dr. Roman Joch, the director of the Civic Institute and director of the Institute for Research on Labor and Family in the Slovak Republic, gave a profound view of the historical development of parliaments and democracy. The ancient Athenians brought democracy, while the ancient Romans developed parliamentarism, he said. Everything was decided in the Roman Senate. Later the ancient Greeks could see the limitations of their understanding of democracy because it could lead to tyranny.

In modern history there was a division of the powers: Legal, judicial and executive powers were divided in order to prevent the tendency to dictatorship. The powers should be in balance. In the United States there is freedom of speech and religious freedom. The U.S. parliamentary system is bicameral, which supports the deliberative democracy. First the parliamentarians have a debate on some issues, and afterward they vote.

The second half of the 19th century was a golden age of parliamentarism, Dr. Joch said. Members of the British Parliament gave excellent speeches that could convince even the opponents.

The second speaker was Hon. Olga Richterová, a member of the Czech Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of Parliament, who spoke about her experiences. She said she considers the bicameral parliament better, because many times the upper chamber returns some laws because they are not good enough and need to be worked out in greater detail. The upper chamber serves as a safeguard for passing good laws. The society is in a process of constant changes, and the parliament should be sensitive to these social changes. A big danger is the spread of fake news and fake campaigns, Hon. Richterová said at the conclusion of her presentation.

A question-and-answer section followed, with some questions from the participants.

The approximately 15 participants expressed their appreciation for this online conference because they could learn a lot about parliaments. Due to urgent duties and voting in the Parliament, some of the invited guest speakers who are members of Parliament could not join this conference.