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## **EU Parliament: Caputova (President of Slovakia), “defence of democracy is core mission of our generation of political leaders”**

(Strasbourg) “It is an honour and privilege to be here and to address the beating heart of the European Union’s democracy here in Strasbourg”. Invited to give a speech on the future of the European Union, Zuzana Caputova, President of the Slovak Republic, addressed the European Parliament today. “My message today is simple: if we do not start defending democracy, it will cease to exist”, she said. “The recent homophobic murder of Juraj Vankuli? and Matúš Horváth on the streets of Bratislava reminds us of this simple truth. Hate decided to kill. The killer could not accept that love can come in different forms. This was an assault not just on the young people from the LGBTIQ community in Slovakia. It was an attack on everyone in Slovakia, because hate crimes always target the very essence of what our society stands for”. “In its essence”, Caputova added, “democracy is the rule by the majority in the interest of all, with a key emphasis on the protection of minorities. If we are failing in their protection, we are undermining democracy itself. In my view, the defence and protection of democracy is the core mission of our generation of political leaders”, of the elected representatives of our citizens. The “task ahead of us is to bring Europe back into balance, which is shaken by crises from within and without. A balance between our rights and our commitments. Between our security and our prosperity, which we have partly built through dependence on those”, like Russia, “who wish to destroy our democracy. A balance in which we can have different opinions, but where we are bound by the values of freedom, solidarity, and liberal democracy”.

Valentina Bombelli