



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

Intervention by

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Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Dr. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament
Ms. Margaret Mensah-Williams, President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians
Mr. Kailash Satyarthi,
Distinguished guests,
Dear colleagues,

This debate on redressing inequalities is of the utmost importance when it comes to young people.

We are clearly seeing the impact of discrimination and persistent inequality on the disillusionment and marginalization of young people. Discrimination and inequality also puts them at risk of being attracted by extremism and violence.

We must stop young people from being marginalized and avoid them getting involved in violence and conflict. We can do this through education and employment; through engaging young people in politics; and through involving them – sometimes in leadership positions – in communities, civil society organizations, sports and the arts.

As parliamentarians, we need to spearhead a comprehensive framework of action to combat all forms of inequality. This framework should be based on respect for the human rights, fundamental freedoms and socioeconomic development of young people, women and children. It should be effective, real, tangible. And it should lie at the heart of all our efforts.

The priorities are clear: compulsory and free education; equal opportunities in the job market, including through quotas for young people and first time job seekers; involving young people in community campaigns, programmes and projects; free access to sports and arts for all; and most importantly, youth participation at all levels of decision-making.

As young parliamentarians, we are committed to ending the manipulation of young people for political gain. We want to work with the older generation to build societies that offer equal opportunities and greater justice for young people.

We have a lot to offer. Our connections with young people in our countries, our dynamism and our creativity are all great assets. We were born in an interconnected world. Politics stands to benefit enormously from our openness to online and offline ties, both within and beyond our own countries and communities.

Despite all of this, young people are still kept away from decision-making and democratic processes. The IPU's flagship research report entitled *Youth participation in national parliaments* found that only 1.9 per cent of the world's parliamentarians are under 30, while half of the population is also under 30.

Can we say that our institutions of governance are representative when they are actually unequal in their composition? How can we deliver for all if not everyone is part of the decision-making?

Colleagues, the practices of democracy must constantly change with time, so that they reflect all segments of society. And indeed, it is clear that diversity is not a source of weakness but a source of strength and richness.

I am proud to be part of this organization that is leading the way for representative institutions and for youth participation.

Combating discrimination is an inherent part of the IPU's work. It is embedded in the IPU's efforts to strengthen development and peace, and to establish representative institutions. The 2030 Agenda offers us a unique opportunity to correct the imbalances of the past, and ensure that no one is left behind anymore.

As representatives of the people, we are well placed to develop legal standards on the elimination of all types of discrimination against vulnerable groups and to strengthen the capacity of those groups to claim their rights.

If we are serious in our endeavours, then we must change today's economic patterns.

The current economic logic of the world is completely irrational. How can we explain and accept that 1 per cent of humanity controls the world's wealth? Redistribution among the 99 per cent will make a better future for all.

We need to encourage partnerships between parliaments, governments, civil society and the private sector. This will help us build a people-centred economy. The private sector, including big transnational corporations, should be included in policy-making processes. But they should not be part of those processes in order to serve individual interests. Instead, they need to do their part to put the economy at the service of all people.

We also have a responsibility to preserve our planet. The race to constantly increase production and consumerism has to slow down drastically. Environmentally unfriendly behaviour patterns will continue to create more inequality as vulnerability to climate change escalates across the world.

To conclude, I want to briefly consider the issue of corruption. Redressing inequalities cannot happen if we do not fight against corruption.

Corruption is one of the greatest barriers to our ability to establish fairness, equity and sustainability. It also seriously diminishes people's trust in our institutions.

As parliamentarians, we must contribute to systematic reviews of government progress on the implementation of development plans. Our contributions must reinforce transparency, access to information and people's rights.

Thank you very much.