

146th IPU Assembly - General Debate
Statement by Ms. Ewa Ernst-Dziedzic, MP
Manama, Bahrain 14.03.2023

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Dear Colleagues,

first of all I want to say thanks to our Bahraini friends for hosting us in their historic & beautiful country. Thank You. "Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: Fighting intolerance" – what a difficult and wide ranging topic, but also a very important one. The issues we face to create inclusive societies are different in every country. The separation between people is not alike in any two countries.

I would like to focus on an issue we face in Austria: The integration of refugees into our society. With a more and more tangible climate crisis more and more people will leave their lands and more conflicts will arise. Hence, we will face more challenges to integrate the affected people who are forced to flee into new societies.

The discourse surrounding integration is often one that puts a lot of expectations on refugees. When politicians talk about integration what they actually mean is assimilation. Refugees should be as invisible as possible. That is not what integration means to me. Integrations means to be able to communicate with each other, to work with each other and to have meaningful social relationships with each other. It does not mean to live alongside each other without noticing each other but to life together. As we are discussing all the difficult issues here together too.

In Austria, but also in many other European countries, we need to do better in allowing refugees access to the labour market, providing language courses, protecting them from discrimination but also to allow them to become members of our societies. In order to allow for integration we must not leave individual countries alone shouldering the challenges, but to create safe migration routes for refugees living in a few large camps on the European borders, so they can move to places able to provide better living situations.

The challenges lying ahead of us are certainly not small, but we inevitably have to face them. They will not be solved by xenophobic / islamophobic rhetoric but by facing them head on. Because: We do not only face a challenge but also a chance to create more diverse, more cooperative societies.

Thank You.