

There are more than eight billion people living on the Earth, and even with such a large number there are no two people who would be exactly alike in their thoughts, feelings, appearance, skills or otherwise. We are all different. That is, differences have been written into the very 'code' of humanity and the human person. Moreover, this has immense value, because let us think for a moment what it would be like if we were all alike. Such a world would be very boring. Differences are enriching. Precisely because of this, the acceptance of differences should indeed be a natural part of everyday life and not a constraint or inevitability. Be it skin colour, sex, language, appearance or religious beliefs.

Empathy and tolerance are important keywords. I am glad that Estonia continues to be a very liberal country. At the parliamentary elections just a week ago, voters gave very strong support precisely to this world view.

From Estonia's and the European perspective, the greatest challenge for the world is to protect peace and democratic values and the territorial integrity of countries. To resolve differences peacefully. Not by using military power, cannons, or tanks. The arms race is taking place at the expense of all of us: this means less money for education, culture, and social affairs. Unfortunately, there are countries who like to speak the language of bombs and cannons or even more brutally: for them, human life is just a tool, a thing they use to achieve their superpower ambitions. I am speaking of Russia and its war of aggression in Ukraine. This war started already in 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. The new phase of this war, that started on the 24 February 2022, has been going on for over a year now, and sadly the end is nowhere to be seen. The countries of the world will have to show more resolve here, because an aggressor's victory in a war inspires other authoritarian regimes to use the same method as well. Tolerating the war may mean that it will reach the home yards of all of us. I acknowledge the member states of the Inter-Parliamentary Union who, at the last General Assembly in Rwanda, adopted with a great majority a resolution condemning Russia's aggression. However, without underestimating in the least the resolute condemnation of Russia's aggression in Ukraine by every country, be they big or small, I would like to appeal to China's conscience, who holds great sway, and therefore has a chance to take a big step towards ending this war. Once Russia understands that it can no longer count on China's tacit support together with its implications, this may indeed become the factor that will bring Russia back to earth.

*IPU 146th Assembly General debate: Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies:  
Fighting intolerance*

Colleagues,

We are living in very turbulent times. The values underpinning the rules-based world order are at stake: freedom, democracy, human rights, and equality. This is a war of the Russian regime against democracy. I am convinced that, when we act together, we are stronger, and we will be able to protect a democratic and inclusive future. There is no alternative to democracy if we want peace. In unity, for peace, that is, for all of us!