

Address of Gabriela Morawska-Stanecka, Deputy Marshal of the Senate of the Republic of Poland, during the general debate “Promoting peaceful coexistence and inclusive societies: combating intolerance” during the 146th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, held in Bahrain.

Dear Madam President, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

referring to the focus of our assembly it is crucial to ask ourselves a question: “What is peaceful coexistence today?” as we already know that it is not just a state of absence of war. By analysing the last decade, it is fair to say that the democratic, peaceful world must be vigilant, as freedom and peace are not given to us once and for all, and economic interest does not always go hand in hand with tolerance, respect for others and peaceful coexistence.

An important element for the peaceful coexistence of states is undoubtedly democratic and fair elections. Internally stable states, whose governments are guided by the voice of the people, do not seek confrontation in foreign policy and seek peaceful resolution of potential conflicts in the interests of their society.

For elections to be fair, which is a guarantee of state stability, not only the transparency of vote counting is needed, but also equal opportunities for candidates running for office. For example, equal opportunities are disturbed when there is no equal access for all political parties to the public media. It is also difficult to talk about fair elections when the public media are monopolized by the ruling party and their coverage does not meet the qualities of objective reporting.

A main condition for the stability of states and societies is also the reduction of inequalities in various areas of social, political and economic life. This includes ensuring equal opportunities for women versus men, helping particular social groups facing different degrees of exclusion and needing support, and involving young people in public discourse.

In conclusion, I would like to add that one of the tasks that we, as parliamentarians, can undertake today to combat intolerance, is to persistently fight hate speech and misinformation.

Efforts should be made to ensure that politicians set a good example for society and do not use hate speech in political discourse. Moreover, they should show more responsibility for what they say, avoid populist statements in political debate and use only verified information as arguments. In this context, the Inter-Parliamentary Union could adopt a resolution calling on parliamentarians from around the world to actively combat hate speech and disinformation.

Thank you.