



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Opening General Debate

Mr. Dan Carden
President of the Board of the IPU
Forum of Young Parliamentarians

147th Assembly and related meetings
24 October – Luanda, Angola

Mr. President of the 147th IPU Assembly,
Mr. President of the IPU,
Mr. Secretary General,
Madam President of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians,
Others (TBC)
Esteemed parliamentarians,
Distinguished guests,

I am honoured to address you for the first time as President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians. I am sorry I could not be with you in person today.

Abraham Lincoln once famously called for “government of the people, by the people, and for the people”. 160 years later, this goal is as relevant as it was back then. But I’m afraid, it is also as elusive.

In 2023, one way we are pushing for this vision is through the SDGs, which includes Goal 16 for peace, justice and strong institutions. Its target 16.7, is precisely about ensuring inclusive decision-making, including in parliaments.

So where do we stand?

Indeed since Lincoln spoke these words, we have made some progress. In the 19th Century, women did not have the right to vote, let alone have seats in parliament. Yet 160 years later, we also still have far too many glaring examples of exclusion. Perhaps the most conspicuous is with youth.

The IPU is the official world custodian for tracking progress on youth representation in parliament for the SDGs. Our latest report on youth in parliament will be launched during this Assembly. What our own data tells us is that progress is far short of where we need to be:

- Despite half the world being under 30, only 2.8% of MPs are 30 and under; only 1.4% are women 30 and under;
- 39% of chambers of parliament have no MPs under 30.

Fellow parliamentarians,

This specific SDG target is our domain. We are the designated "changemakers". The ball is in our court. It is no longer the time for mere words. It is the time for action!

We young MPs are doing our part. Just last month, 300 of us came together in Hanoi for the Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians to discuss how to accelerate the SDGs. Our Conference statement outlined a bold set of proposals. When it comes to SDG 16, we already know what works. We now need to deliver.

The pledges of the "I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament" campaign can guide us. And Africa, the world's youngest continent, is showing inspiring leadership.

- We need more youth quotas, like we see in countries like Algeria, Kenya, Rwanda, and Morocco;
- We need to lower the ages of eligibility for office, like was done in Nigeria.
- And we need more channels for youth in parliament, such as youth caucuses like those being created in South Africa, South Sudan, and Zambia.

The IPU has been a leader for youth. But if we want to continue to do so, we need to go further in our own organisation as well. The current and previous Board have been discussing ways to do this. And in consultation with them, I have formally proposed that IPU reduce the age limit to be considered a young parliamentarian to 40 years of age.

We need the IPU to continue to be a bold leader for youth. I hope you will all walk the talk with us and support this initiative.

Thank you.