

Speech of **Ms Maris Lauri**, Head of the IPU Estonia group at the General Debate  
*“Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding”*.

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Distinguished Chair, dear colleagues, honourable hosts!

Few days ago I was in Athens in Greece, where democracy was born thousands of years ago. Women political leaders around the globe gathered in Athens to discuss issues related to democracy in the 21st century.

It would be good to have the same atmosphere here, in IPU, as well.

Although coming from very different backgrounds, having different political views and wide range of problems in our countries, we had a lot of common themes to discuss.

That was not only the matter of women representation, we discussed about AI, social media, role of political parties in democracy, conflicts and so on.

We all understood that the most important task for politicians is the obligation is to look further to the future and set the path so that life of those we represent, our voters and citizens of our countries, would be better.

I believe that this obligation applies to all of us here and to other parliamentarians as well.

No nation or country is happy if others around it are not. It is impossible to live happily on expense of others, at least not very long. You will remain alone, if you see only enemies around yourself and think that you are the only always right.

However, it is possible to learn from others and work together to solve complex problems and big crisis.

Sharing experiences, explaining our pasts and burdens, finding understanding can be done more easily in the frame that only parliamentary diplomacy can provide.

Be it a session of a parliamentary assembly, visit of a parliamentary friendship

group to a respective country – once you have broken bread somebody, it becomes increasingly harder to say “no” to them.

Yes, sometimes it is hard to get even to that point. As first thing to reach is to put away pre-judgments and start listening to each other. It is very hard if there are bad and painful memories, as emotions may cloud the clear thinking and the hence the ultimate goal of prosperity and peace.

The Interparliamentary Union provides an excellent platform for further prospering parliamentary diplomacy.

With 181 Member States and 15 Associate Members, the IPU gives us a unique opportunity to deepen contacts between all regions of the world. Here, we can collaborate with parliamentarians from other countries, address shared diplomatic challenges and promote cooperation. We can build bridges to fill the gap between governments and citizens and strengthens international relations. Building diplomatic relationships based on mutual respect and cooperation can pave the way for lasting peace.

I would like to conclude borrowing words of English poet, priest and member of the Parliament John Donne: “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main “. We tend to forget this simple and worn off truth until facing a serious challenge and re-discovering the need to cooperate.

Thank you for your attention!