



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Opening General Debate

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

148th Assembly and related meetings
24 March – Geneva, Switzerland

Madam President of the IPU,
Mr. Secretary General,
Madam President of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians,
Esteemed parliamentarians,
Distinguished guests,

I am honoured to address you today in this beautiful city. Geneva is called the ‘Capital of peace’. It is fitting that we meet here to discuss ‘Peace’ at a moment when it is so badly needed.

Clearly, we have a lot of hard work to do. For youth, the situation is heartbreaking. 408 million young people between 15 and 29 live in a situation of armed conflict. That is roughly 1 in every 4 young people, and that does not even include children.

This number isn’t just a statistic; it’s a call to action for all of us.

War and peace is not a theoretical exercise, but a daily reality for hundreds of millions of youth. When youth are in conflict, it means that they are not likely receiving an education. It means they are not holding decent employment. It means they see less hope for their futures.

Youth are in their formative years. What does the future look like, if almost half a billion young people are left behind? If their rights to education and employment are ruined? If even their right to life is destroyed. This nightmare future is where so many are heading towards.

Unless we act.

As young MPs, we are the voices of the too many young men and women that don’t have a voice and are left out. It is regrettably ironic that youth are the first targeted for recruitment, and the first to fight. But they are among the last to have a seat for peace-making and diplomacy.

The importance of youth participation for peace and security has been reiterated at the IPU and at the UN, including in Security Council Resolution 2250. But young people and young leaders have too often not been in positions to have an impact. This exclusion deprives decision-makers of valuable perspectives. It also can drive further marginalization, which can lead to radicalization and perpetuate conflict.

We cannot continue this way and change is needed.

Parliamentarians must help implement Resolution 2250 on Youth peace and security. Youth need to be in peace processes. This also means partnering with youth-led organizations and civil society.

And to stop conflict, we need to prevent it before it begins. Youth poverty and unemployment provides fertile ground for disputes. We need greater attention and investment in education, employment and training for youth. We also need to nurture again young people's well-being, happiness, and dreams. A generation without perspective is a generation lost today and lost in the future.

Dear colleagues,

Any atrocities are no justification for further violence and retaliation. History has shown us time and again that this only perpetuates a cycle of suffering and destruction.

Mahatma Gandhi once said: "An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind."

For our youth, for our future, and for ourselves, I hope we can follow this advice, so we break the cycle of violence, and make this generation of young people, the last, to face such horrors. Thank you.