



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

149th IPU Assembly

Geneva
13–17 October 2024



Speech by Mr. Bertrand Piccard, Explorer and technology pioneer, Special guest

Opening of the 149th IPU Assembly, Geneva

Geneva, 13 October 2024

Madam President,
Excellencies,

I am not here because I flew around the world in a balloon and later in a solar powered airplane. I am here because I know that solutions exist to protect the environment and that these solutions are profitable. It means that it is a fantastic opportunity for every country to develop itself to be more competitive with new technical solutions.

At this stage, the Solar Impulse Foundation has identified 1,780 systems, products, materials, processes, devices and software that allow to protect the environment. And why are they profitable? Because they are efficient today. The main problem of our world is the fact that we are not efficient. We are wasting energy. We are wasting natural resources. And this costs a fortune. Can you imagine that three quarters of the energy that is produced today in our world is lost? It is lost because of wrong behaviour, but also outdated technologies. And this, for me, was the major revelation from the flight around the world in a solar powered airplane – the gap between what allows us to fly with no noise, with no pollution, with no fuel, just on renewable energy, and what happens in our world today, a world of waste, a world that costs a fortune because of all the resources that are produced and wasted and lost.

So today, we have to go from the quantitative economy to the qualitative economy instead of producing, consuming, selling more and more products at a cheaper and cheaper price to be competitive by having low salaries that create a lot of social inequalities, a lot of waste and a lot of pollution. All the solutions I mentioned allow us to shift to a qualitative economy, an economy that creates jobs, that creates economical profit by replacing what is polluting by what protects the environment. And we see that today, we can change the narrative thanks to these solutions.

When you are in parliamentary debates, when you are speaking with politicians, when you are speaking with corporations, to the media, to the public, to the people electing you, you can have a new narrative. Today, it is no longer a sacrificial and expensive ecology. No, we can have a profitable ecology. We can have a clean industry. We can have new business opportunities that allow for more efficiency in all fields.

A new narrative has also to be used when we speak of decarbonization. You had a session last year on climate change. When we speak of climate change, very often we speak of decarbonization, which is perceived by countries as a handicap for the economy. Developing countries especially are thinking, why should we make any sacrifice for decarbonization? But if all these new solutions are implemented in the different countries, it allows for their modernization. So, the question today is to modernize, and decarbonization will only be the logical consequence of this modernization. The goal is not to make a sacrifice for future generations, but to have an advantage, a benefit for today's generations, which means that this is not a cost, it is a profitable

investment. We will not lose jobs. We will create new jobs. It is a complete shift from the sacrifice made to profit. Efficiency and economical models today will allow developing countries, who do not have enough money, to invest in renewable energies that are much cheaper than fossil fuels. That means you pay for the use of the new energies and the new infrastructures instead of having to buy these systems.

So, you see that finance, economy, industry, ecology and politics, all start to come together. But nothing will happen without you. You are the ones who are making the laws, the legislation. The legislation today is as outdated as the systems we still use. The laws today allow energy loss, pollution, CO² emissions in the atmosphere. If you manage to modernize the legal framework, it will be a fantastic incentive to take on board all these new solutions to have more efficiency, to shift to the qualitative economy.

Of course, it needs to be appealing, to be attractive, the protection of the environment has to be a spectacular desire to do better for the quality of life. This is why I have now launched a new project. Flying around the world in a balloon was my personal dream. Flying around the world in a solar powered airplane was a way to promote clean technologies and renewable energies. But today, I have decided to launch a project called "Climate Impulse" –a hydrogen powered airplane to fly around the world with no fuel and absolutely zero emissions. This airplane is under construction today. We have the shadow of the plane flying over the world, not yet the real plane, but the message is extremely important today. We have to give hope to the world, because there is too much eco-anxiety, eco-depression, too many people think there is no future. We need to show that we can do much more. To have an airplane fly around the world only on hydrogen is a way to make decarbonization and modernization much more exciting. This airplane will fly above a lot of countries that are represented here. It will fly nine days around the world. Of course, you might think that it is absolutely impossible because there is no hydrogen industry, because nobody produces and uses hydrogen. And you also hear that aviation can never decarbonize. Well, this is exactly why we need to aim for the impossible.

And like you heard at the beginning of the film, everything was considered impossible until the moment it was done. So, we have to create a desire to use clean fuels, to be the impulse for this type of new project and show that hope is only possible with action. You cannot have hope without action. And this is why today there is so much eco-anxiety and eco-depression. It is because we do not have enough action. And we do not have enough action because until now, we did not have enough solutions. Now that we have solutions, we can go into the action. We need the political world to have this incentive put into legislation.

This is why I am happy to be here, and I count on you all as co-pilots of this Climate Impulse plane, because without the political world, nothing will happen. You cannot imagine how important you are because this industry does not want to have a distorted competitiveness. It wants to have an even playing field. It wants to have prices that are comparable. It also wants incentives for what is not yet profitable. I gave you a number of solutions that are profitable, but many are not yet profitable. They need to be pushed by legal frameworks, by incentives and subsidies. Maybe you did not know it until now, but you are the adventurers. You are the explorers of the twenty-first century, and we all count on you to put the legal framework in place so that all these solutions, all these targets, can be successful.

I am not going to end my speech by saying "Thank you for your attention". I am going to end my speech by saying "Please do it; we need it!".