



Speech Elisabeth Winkelmeier-Becker, 7 April 2025,
150 IPU Assembly, General Debate

Madame President, Dear colleagues,

- Let me begin with a quote from the former President of the German Bundestag and leader of our IPU delegation, Norbert Lammert: “It is not the government that ‘keeps’ a parliament, but the parliament that determines and scrutinises the government” (speech of October 27, 2009).
What does that mean?
- In the system of separation of powers, the strongest democratic legitimacy is held by the members of parliament directly elected by the people, who know the living conditions throughout the country and are committed to improvements. This also gives them a special responsibility to represent the different but legitimate interests of citizens and to develop solutions that best serve everybody and the common good.
- Particularly in view of the global challenges of our time - growing inequality, climate change, a tense global political situation and democratic backsliding, to name but a few - we need strong parliaments.
- Strong parliaments are characterized by effective scrutiny and legislative rights in relation to the government in office. Strong parliaments grant opposition rights and fill them with life, for example through the possibility of committees of inquiry. And strong parliaments are deeply rooted in society in that, as the central representative body, they constitute a chain of legitimacy between the people and the government.

II. Social development and justice

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- One of the great challenges of our time is social development and justice on a national and international level.
 - Our German constitution, the Basic Law, recognizes the human dignity and equal rights of every human being, regardless of social or ethnic origin, religion, age or gender. Because no one chooses whether they are born into a rich or poor family, as a man or woman, with one ethnicity or another.
Nevertheless, there are also different levels of wealth and income in Germany. But it is an important concern of politics to ensure social security and a strong middle of society, and to prevent the gap from widening too far.

Let me highlight some points that are crucial for that in a modern welfare state.

- It is essential that everyone has access to free education, so that everyone who is able to can achieve professional and social advancement through their own efforts. As a good example I'd like to mention the school Number 60 here in Tashkent, that I visited a few days ago and which offers high-level education for every child, without fees. It is part of social justice that higher incomes are taxed disproportionately more than lower incomes and that family burdens are taken into account. After all, the strong shoulders should bear more than the weak ones.
- The welfare state includes insurance that covers the major risks in life, such as poverty due to age, illness or unemployment. Above all, it provides a pension in old age that is financed by employees' contributions and is not a charity handout, but the reward for many years of work and contributions paid in.
- We have legally-required health insurance and unemployment insurance that give every citizen the necessary personal security and, through that, the courage to build up something for themselves and their own family. But - and this is also important: Solidarity is not a one-way street: everyone must do what they can to stand on their own

two feet and make their contribution to the community; then they can also rely on the help of the community when they themselves need support.

- I am convinced that these are the preconditions for social justice, development and prosperity in the country, and also for peace both internally and externally. Unfortunately, we see evidence in many countries that when one ethnic group oppresses another, when there is wealth only for the few and poverty without opportunity for others, or when one gender has the power and the other is oppressed, it leads to war, destruction, lack of freedom and great suffering.
- It is therefore our special responsibility as parliamentarians to create framework conditions in our countries that create social security and justice for the people in their home countries!
- Social justice is not a coincidence and not a luxury - it is a political decision. As parliamentarians, we have a special responsibility. We shape laws. We manage budgets. We set priorities. The Sustainable Development Goals are our compass for this development. That is what people expect from us. And it is our responsibility to make this reality.

Thank you for listening!