

Speech of **Ms Helle-Moonika Helme**, Member of the IPU Estonia group at the General Debate “*Strengthening trust and embracing hope for our common future*”.

The Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, Rome, Italy

Distinguished Chair, Madam President, esteemed religious leaders, dear colleagues, honourable hosts!

First of all, as a Christian and as a Member of Parliament, I want to say that I am very grateful to God for having brought us all together here to give us the opportunity to declare, each in their own faith, the universal truth we as human beings have the duty to stand for so that we could build hope for a better tomorrow for us all. May the Divine Will bring us to an understanding of one another and give prosperity to all nations and peoples.

We are living in a difficult and challenging time. Unfortunately, it is full of various crises, conflicts, pain and suffering, all of which are breaking the human spirit....which is why we here, parliamentarians, spiritual leaders, all people of faith, from all religions, must be the light of hope for the whole world. Both in word and in deed.

We do not know what tomorrow will bring, how much time we will be given, so let's use today to live, to be kind to others, to notice, to share, to help and to love. This is a thread that runs through all religions. In the same way as human pain and human suffering are universal and do not depend on which religion you belong to. Against this background, which we can see in conflicts around the world, it is our ultimate duty to remind each other that all life is given by God and is sacred.

And there are no ideological, religious or political reasons that give the right to take it away from anyone.

Therefore, the supreme imperative of all our actions, no matter which religion we represent, is to take from it all the good that creates a better world for all of us, a better future for our children.

In Estonia, we recently celebrated a very sad anniversary, the anniversary of the deportation of 1941, where almost the entire intellectual and social elite of our nation, as well as thousands of ordinary people – women, children and the elderly – were torn from their homes, husbands were separated from their wives, mothers from their children, and deported by trains to Siberia. Eight decades have passed since then, but the wounds that were struck in the spirit and the body of one nation are healing slowly, if at all.

That is why we as people can feel and understand what is felt by those who are in a similar situation, especially in today's conflicts.

Estonia is a small country and the Estonians are a small nation. But we have the opportunity to live in safety and security when large countries and nations, where our brothers and sisters in faith live, stand for peace throughout the world.

Let us then be good tools in the hands of our God and let us do His good work in His almighty will.

Thank you for your attention!