

Colleagues,

It is a pleasure and a privilege for me to address you today as Vice President of the Senate of Italy. This is an important debate, focusing on key topics such as women's participation in politics and youth engagement in public life.

We are living through a historic moment, in which polarisation, misinformation, and mistrust towards institutions are on the rise. And yet, many people remain eager to contribute to the protection of the common good. It is our duty, as representatives of these institutions, to create the right conditions for this civic passion to flourish and to remove all barriers that stand in its way.

Representation is not just a principle — it is the very essence of democracy. For democracy to be genuine, it must be inclusive. Women and girls must be active participants in decision-making processes.

If that is not the case, then we cannot speak of true representation. In Italy, progress has been made over the past ten years. Today, over 33% of our parliamentarians are women — a significant change from the 5% in the first legislature of 1948.

With regard to young people, it is essential that we remove the socio-economic barriers that limit their participation in public life. We are also aware of the difficult context we collectively face, including hate campaigns, particularly those targeting women in politics.

In Italy and in other countries, many women who choose to take an active role in political life become victims of sexist and verbally violent attacks — often, unfortunately, online.

I will conclude with this conviction: in challenging times such as these, strengthening participation is not only a matter of justice — it is a true strategy. Where institutions are inclusive, societies are more resilient and stronger.

Thank you for your attention. I also wish to thank Ireland for giving me the opportunity to speak ahead of time, and to express my thanks to the interpreters and to all of you.