



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speaking notes

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Parliamentarians

P20 Meeting of Young Parliamentarians
South Africa
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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr./Madam President,
Fellow young parliamentarians
Ladies and gentlemen,

I first wish to thank the Parliament of South Africa for hosting this event and for organizing this first-ever P20 Meeting of Young Parliamentarians. As a member of the IPU Bureau of Young Parliamentarians, on behalf of the IPU, I am pleased to welcome this initiative and to take part in its launch.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To set the scene, let me begin by sharing some alarming stats that the IPU launched two weeks ago at our Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Peru:

- Only 2.8% of the world's MPs are 30 years old or younger. This proportion had been growing steadily since 2014, but is now at a standstill since 2023.
- Young women are especially excluded: just 1.2% of MPs are women under 30. This proportion has actually declined since 2023.
- In 37% of chambers, there are literally no MPs under 30.

Parliaments are supposed to reflect the societies they represent. However, when it comes to youth, we are very far from accomplishing this goal.

When half the world is under 30 but fewer than 3% of MPs are, it is not just a statistic — but a democratic emergency.

Youth inclusion is needed for a just and representative society. But beyond being the *right* thing to achieve, it is also the *smart* thing. The reason is simple: we meet at a time when the global community is tackling unprecedented challenges. From climate change to technological disruption. We need all hands on deck, and the fresh and innovative ideas brought by youth are one of our greatest resources to solve these global problems.

It is this vision for a more inclusive parliament that propelled IPU's own youth movement. This began in 2010, when member parliaments adopted a groundbreaking resolution on 'Youth Participation in the Democratic Process'. This came at a time when the world's youth were demanding change. Their voices had been at the margins. The complaint that young people were being left unheard and unrepresented was ringing out in the streets of Tunis, on the squares of Cairo, on university campuses of the United Kingdom, and on the sidewalks of Wall Street.

The resolution was a rallying call for change and a roadmap on how to achieve it. It called on parliaments and other stakeholders to enhance the number and influence of young people's participation in parliaments, and a new era of international cooperation to support this. The IPU has been working tirelessly to implement this resolution ever since:

- We created the Forum of Young Parliamentarians. As the global megaphone of the world's young MPs, this body serves to enhance youth participation in national parliaments, and also strengthen the participation of young MPs within the IPU itself.

Since its inception, the Forum has been serving as a hub for MPs from around the world to report on progress in their countries, and to coordinate action. It has also led to changes within IPU structures: the proportion of young MPs at our Assemblies has grown significantly, and young MPs are represented in IPU governing bodies.

I am also particularly proud of the Forum's work in championing gender equality, with parity being mandatory within the Forum Bureau.
- The IPU Resolution also led to IPU being the global observatory on youth in parliament. By collecting data on ages of MPs, and parliamentary actions to promote youth, we have become an international reference on this topic, and an official custodian used by the UN to measure progress for SDG 16.
- Since 2014, we have also been organizing yearly Global Conferences of Young Parliamentarians. We just held our 11th Conference in Peru, where we focused on the role of young MPs in uniting generations for gender equality. Here, we made bold calls for gender parity in parliament, an end to violence against women MPs, and greater cooperation with stakeholders like civil society in equality efforts. I invite you all to check out our Outcome document on the IPU website.
- Since our youth movement began, IPU has also organized an array of other activities to empower young parliamentarians from the national to the global levels. This includes skills training and capacity building on key topics, such as climate change, employment, sustaining peace, and much more.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have made great strides since our resolution from 2010, but as we can see, much more work and action is needed to ensure meaningful youth participation in politics. The last 15 years have shown us the magnitude of the problem, but they have also revealed the solutions that we know can help us deliver results. Many of these have been summarized in the six pledges of IPU's 'I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!' campaign, which was launched in 2021. The actions include:

1. Promoting youth quotas: I am pleased that these are increasingly common in parliaments, nearly doubling in number since 2014.
2. Aligning the age of eligibility for political office with that of voting. We firmly believe that if you are old enough to vote, pay taxes, or serve in the military, you cannot be too young to run for office.
3. Supporting youth channels in parliament, including youth caucuses and committees.
4. Empowering young MPs, by providing trainings, and ensuring they have leadership positions in parliament.
5. Mentoring and supporting young aspirants hoping to get more involved in politics.
6. And advocating for youth participation.

Today, over 1000 MPs from 155 countries, and 90 Speakers of Parliament, have joined this campaign. If you have not already done so, I invite you all to sign up as well. This can be done in just a couple of minutes through the IPU's website.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we can see, we know many of the solutions that can deliver transformative change for youth in politics. And we have a strong coalition of changemakers who are working to this end. What we need more than ever is the political sense of urgency, and determination, to make this issue a priority in each of our countries.

We need everyone working together, across the globe. And this is why this first meeting of P20 Young Parliamentarians is so important. It provides a new launchpad to mobilize change. I encourage you all to seize this moment and use the opportunity to advance the cause of youth participation further.

The IPU and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians stand ready to work with you to meet this shared objective. Thank you.