

## General debate on ‘Nurturing hope, securing peace and ensuring justice for future generations’

We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children

This famous saying makes clear that we should be grateful for what we have inherited, but, even more, we bear an enormous responsibility to pass on this legacy as faithfully and vitally as possible to our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. To future generations.

In 2020, philosopher Roman Krznaric brought the notion of future generations to the forefront, asking how we can put long-term thinking back at the centre of our lives at a time when the tyranny of the here and now dominates, in daily life and in politics.

Once upon a time... political decision-making brought about the Dutch polders and dykes, and the London sewer system. However, in recent days, politics seems to have been reduced to short-term competition, easily distracted by the latest social media uproar. Our political horizon seems to be no further than the next election, at most a few years. By doing so, we are putting off the risks of systemic problems, such as the climate crisis and uncontrollable AI, and passing the burdens to future generations. In this way, Krznaric argues, we, the current generations, are **colonising the future**.

Talking about future generations is a good way to develop long-term thinking. Particularly in politics, it is a valuable perspective.

Why?

In my opinion, long-term politics has the power to depolarise and, concurrently, sets ambitious goals. We **all** want clean air to breathe and clean drinking water for our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In these ambitions, there are no big differences between social democrats and liberals, or between right-wing and green parties.

There are many initiatives worldwide aimed at giving future generations a voice in democratic decision-making processes. In 2024, a UN treaty for future generations was adopted. On a more practical note, a proven method of giving future generations a voice is the use of randomly selected citizens’ assemblies,

for these have shown that participants are likely to propose solutions that also benefit the long term.

But, since nearly all decisions have intergenerational effects, in a representative democracy that considers the interests of all those affected by its decisions, it is also extremely important that politicians are committed to systematically representing the voice of future generations.

In the Netherlands, we took the first steps to start doing so. I will share a few of our recent efforts to secure intergenerational justice.

In 2025, the Dutch Senate adopted a motion to promote forward-looking, sustainable lawmaking that benefits future generations. The initiative was endorsed by opposition and coalition parties, proposing an extra criterion that should be assessed in every new law, addressing questions like: Is the bill also future-proof - what consequences will people and the planet face in, say, fifty years? To properly answer that question for each bill, a future assessment should be conducted as standard for new legislative proposals, providing insight into the long-term effects of policy and regulations.

Last week, we discussed this point with the new prime minister, Rob Jetten. He affirmed that the new government will develop a ‘generational test’, based on the shared understanding that generations are interconnected, and that every decision of today affects not only tomorrow but also all days thereafter.

Granting future generations a solid position in parliamentary decision-making is an urgent job for the present generation of politicians. We are facing critical challenges: a climate crisis, increasing geopolitical conflicts, the erosion of democracies and the rise of autocracies worldwide. For securing peace and ensuring justice for future generations, the moment is now.

To conclude,

When it comes to ‘nurturing hope for future generations’, I would like to add a phrase from the American writer Rebecca Solnit.

Hope, she writes, is not patiently waiting and wishing for the best. On the contrary, Hope is an axe that can break down doors in an emergency.

Hope is not based on wait-and-see. Hope demands working and acting. Providing hope for future generations, particularly, means hard work for us, the present parliamentarians, to get there.

Let us take on that responsibility and work towards a firm resolution in this Interparliamentary Union to develop political instruments that encourage and establish future-generations-proof politics.

Thank you