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Draft speech

Dear President,
Distinguished guests,

It is an honour for me to speak here in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, on behalf of the European Parliament and President Roberta Metsola. Thank you for your invitation.

We are members of Parliament, and we represent people who want to live in peace. If there is no peace, there is no development, no environment, no international relations.

The future is not some far away thing that we leave in the last place of our busy agenda. Like young Georgina from Tanzania said yesterday: "Kilimanjaro is beautiful **today**, but the beauty is fading and soon, all the snow and ice will be gone due to climate change. **The future is today.**"

Many may see Europe as a place of privilege. Maybe others see it as the past. Maybe others see our obsession with freedom, with rights, with rule-based order as imposing on them.

But if there is a contribution to humanity that Europe brought is this. That when countries unite, war becomes impossible. The European Union is the living proof of peace. And it is not only a project of peace. It is its evidence, its reality.

Over the past months, we have witnessed not only the persistence of existing conflicts but also the emergence of new ones across the globe. The impact of these wars does not remain confined to their immediate theatres – the crises affect us all: our security, our economies, and our shared future.

If the League of Nations serves as proof, it is that it is easier to reform what you have, than cancel altogether. We had a major world war when we destroyed multilateral institutions. Is that we want today as well? Are we sure we can afford another war? Are we sure there is a tomorrow after that?

We are talking today about hope, peace, and justice. They don't just happen. We build them. Step by step. Decision by decision.

Hope, by its very nature, is fragile. Nurturing hope is not naïve optimism - it is a necessity.

Hope starts when people feel seen, heard, and respected. It grows when there are real opportunities—good schools, fair jobs, and a chance to build a good life.

That means: investing in education and digital access for all. Fighting inequality in all its forms. And making gender equality a reality—not just in words, but in pay, in leadership, and in safety.

When women and girls move forward, our whole society moves forward. And when young people see a future, they help build it. Because when people feel left behind, when they feel ignored, frustration grows—and that frustration can turn into division.

Hope thrives when people can see a path forward—and believe they can walk it.

Hope is born out of our need to feel protected and safe.

It is our job as politicians to secure for our people: food on the table, energy they can afford, a safe environment, and rights that are respected.

Because if people feel unsafe in their daily lives, no military strength can fix that.

And if we cannot ensure this, we failed.

About **peace** now. Can we secure it?

In Europe, we have experienced both the devastation of war and the transformative power of peace.

The European Union was built as a peace project, with a clear ambition: to ensure that such tragedies would never happen again.

What started with economic cooperation, gradually became a political union. Our project is still evolving, with the democratic values at its core.

Today, nearly 500 million citizens benefit from freedoms once unimaginable: to move, work, study, and live across borders.

For more than 75 consecutive years, we have peace in Europe, which has never been lived before on our continent.

When insecurity grows, fear grows. And fear is the fuel of polarization.

And we acknowledge this in Europe. That is why the European Parliament listens to people's voices and includes them in the decision-making.

Renewing public confidence in democratic systems is our priority in a world of democratic backsliding.

But the ones who are most affected by our decisions are actually not in this room. They are the next generation.

Justice means we don't pass on bigger problems than the ones we received. It means: taking climate action seriously. Building economies that are fair and sustainable. Protecting resources, not exhausting them. And making sure equality moves forward, not backward.

Intergenerational responsibility is our guiding principle. Participative democracy is the **ONLY** way to bring all generations together.

For example, Democracy Support is a pillar of the European Parliament action, especially in the EU acceding countries. But how can we link people with the national and supra-national levels?

And I recall here the Citizens' Assemblies that the European Parliament is supporting in the Western Balkans and all the citizens' fora all across Europe.

But the citizens are telling us about their fears through many channels.

We cannot say we didn't know. We do know. The question is: will we act?

Because when people lose faith that the system is fair, they begin to lose faith in democracy itself.

What we delay today, others will have to fix tomorrow.

Colleagues, fellow parliamentarians, when hope fades, when insecurity rises, and when justice feels out of reach—democracy weakens.

People stop trusting institutions.

They stop trusting each other. Polarization deepens. Societies split into camps instead of coming together around solutions. And in that environment, simple answers and extreme voices gain ground.

If we want to protect democracy, we must deliver: fairness, security, and real opportunities.

Strong democracies are built on trust—and trust is built on results.

We need to act now.

Thank you.