



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Dr. Tulia Ackson, IPU President

Forum of Young Parliamentarians - 152nd Assembly and related meetings

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Madam President of the Bureau of Young Parliamentarians,
Mr. Secretary General,
Young parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Before turning to the main item, having been unable to attend the opening of this Forum, allow me to first express my appreciation for the opportunity to address you at this Assembly.

We meet at a moment that calls for honesty: around the world, democracy is under strain. Conflicts are multiplying. Generations of progress are rolling back before our eyes.

This Assembly is an opportunity for us to come together to turn this tide and rebuild hope at a time when it is a scarce commodity.

As we know, young people are often the first to feel the impact of global events, yet too often the last to be heard. For much of the IPU's history, their voice was not strongly present. Over the past 15 years, however, we have begun to make meaningful progress.

Since the Resolution on youth was adopted by IPU members in 2010, and the creation of this Forum, IPU has been at the vanguard of the global youth movement.

A lot of things happened in 2014: In this year, the IPU started to collect data on ages of MPs. Back then, only 1.4% of MPs were aged 30 and under. As we will see, this number has now doubled, to 2.8%.

While we still have a long way to go for equitable representation, since 2014, we have seen progress.

Also in 2014, this Forum was born. It has only strengthened over the years, and has helped bring change within the IPU, and beyond. Members of your Bureau have a seat in all IPU bodies, including the Executive Committee. Delegations have become younger, and young parliamentarians are shaping Assembly decisions and outcomes more than ever before.

Again, in 2014, a dedicated programme on youth participation was created at the IPU. And again, in 2014, the first Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians took place.

A lot happened in 2014. But there is one more thing: 2014 was also the year that our Secretary General took up his office.

This is no coincidence. And this finally brings me to this special moment to recognize one of the chief architects of this youth movement.

Dear Martin,

At this Assembly, we mark the conclusion of your mandate as Secretary General. This is a moment I want to acknowledge here, in this Forum, because your connection to the work of young MPs is one of the things that has defined your tenure.

You believed, and you demonstrated through action, that youth participation must be meaningful, not symbolic. Under your mandate, this Forum was created and gained genuine visibility and influence.

Leadership can be measured by the space one creates for others to grow. Through your stewardship, many young parliamentarians have developed confidence, networks and skills that they carry back to their countries. The ripple effects of that investment will be felt for years to come.

I wish to thank you most warmly for being this leader. Your legacy will live on here in this Forum – in the young MPs you empowered and in the voices you gave room to grow.

I'm sure I speak for all of us in wishing you continued success and well-deserved fulfilment in the years ahead.

Thank you.