

Speech by Mr. Sebastian Tynkkynen, Vice Chair of the Finnish delegation (young parliamentarian – below 45 years of age) at the 141th IPU Assembly in Belgrade on the general debate theme:

Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and mechanisms, and the contribution of regional cooperation

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

If we look at the most successful and well-off countries in the world, we can without hesitation draw a conclusion that democracy is our source of strength. Although democracy may seem vague as if it was a force out of the reach of an individual, it is quite the opposite. Individuals and peoples of certain areas create democracy, which means that the nature of democracy originates with the people, not from outside. This makes democracy fragile. It means that we must respect and honor democracy if we want to retain it in the future as well. The results of democratic, free and fair elections need to be honoured, even though they would not satisfy everyone.

Difficulties may occur when it comes to defining the limits of democratic entities. Which group of people should have a right to self-determination and which group should be regarded as an integral part of a larger democratic entity? We have seen unfortunate events in Hong Kong, in Catalonia and in Kurdistan. I would like to emphasize the need to finding peaceful solutions that respect the will of the people in certain areas, in one way or another. It serves the interest of all of us and guarantees that democracy sustains its strength.

Societies and nations can develop effectively and sustainably only if the people consider the exercise of power legitimate. It is also necessary if we want to have effective international co-operation and international rules that prevent conflicts. No rules or legislation will prevent conflicts if we have groups that feel their freedom is severely restricted and they cannot have their voice heard. By allowing democracy to spread and by respecting the idea of democracy, we will set the tone for effective international cooperation that will aim for peace and well-being. It is the only way that will work in the long term.

Thank you!