

Speech C. Roth (Germany)

Dear fellow parliamentarians,
dear ladies and gentlemen.

We live in times when the youth population is the largest it has ever been in history.

More than ever should we remember what I believe to be the best description of sustainability:

“We have not inherited this earth from our parents to do with it what we will.

We have borrowed it from our children.”

This means, very concretely, to give youth a voice, for them to co-decide about their own future and that of their children.

In that context, the IPU is right to warn in its latest report that young people continue to be chronically under-represented in the world’s parliaments.

Don’t get me wrong, I am convinced that the tradition of a “Council of the Elders” has its right to exist.

But don’t leave the Elders alone in Parliament!

After all, the younger you are, the more future you have in front of you – and the more you should be allowed to pro-actively work on that future.

At the same time, when you borrow something, your first priority should be to make sure that it can be handed back in the same, preferably even in a better condition.

That is exactly what the “Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, that we adopted in New York last year, is all about.

What matters now, however, is: implementation, implementation, implementation – of all Sustainable Development Goals, around the globe, in an inclusive and coherent manner.

And let me add, dear colleagues from what is so often called the “developing” world: the SDGs show one thing more than anything else, namely that industrialised countries like mine are developing countries, too!

If we, as international community, want to make the Agenda 2030 a success, then we all must start at home.

So, dear fellow Europeans, instead of flooding the markets in the global South with our subsidised agricultural surplus products, let us support sustainable family farming, and create a fair and inclusive trading system.

Instead of exporting arms and weapons into conflict regions, let us foster peace and intensify conflict prevention.

Above all, however, let us fight climate change and promote renewable energies in every way we can.

Here again, the Paris agreement was a tremendous success, but should only be understood as a first step into the right direction.

Now is the time for implementation, and this should be true for every country represented here.

Finally, when we think about the world we are supposed to hand back to our children, how could we not think about the over 30 million refugees under the age of 18, about those many unaccompanied minors fleeing the horrors of war and terror.

It is our duty, dear colleagues, not to build walls, fences and ditches – but to give those young refugees a perspective and future.

By all means, we must avoid that a whole generation gets lost because of wars and conflicts they have not the slightest responsibility for.

Here again, let us not only cure the symptoms, but tackle the root causes of migration.

As long as there is war and conflict, and as long as we sustain an economic system that allows 62 individuals to hold as much wealth as 3,5 billion – there will be migration.

And in the end, it is always the most fragile members of our society who suffer the most, including children and youth.

Let us go home, therefore, and work on what really matters: sustainable change, equality, freedom.

After all, the day will come when our children claim back their planet.

It is going to be the day we all will be held to account.

We better get prepared.

Thank you.