

**134th IPU Assembly**  
**SPEECH by Pia LOCATELLI**  
**ITALIAN DELEGATION**

First of all let me thank the IPU for organizing this important debate on rejuvenating democracy and let me also thank Zambia for hosting the 134<sup>th</sup> Assembly. Africa is a young continent with many young democracies and the choice of the theme of the general debate could not be more timely.

In this debate somebody said that rejuvenating democracy is a necessity, I would rather say that it is not only a necessity, it is a must.

In my country, Italy, we have started to pay attention to the issue and to work on it for some years now: our leaders - not only in politics but in all fields - were among the oldest ones in the world. But we committed to changing it, starting from our Parliament.

Ten years ago the average age in the Chamber of Deputies was 52, with men being older than women; two years later, the average age went down to 50 and a half; in this Parliament which started in 2013 the average age is 45 and a half, women's average age being five years less than men's: 42 versus 47.

Just to give you a quick glance: in 2006 MPs aged between 25 and 29 were three, now they are 48, a big jump ahead.

The same goes for ministers: in a cabinet comprising 15 ministers, the average age is 46, and the prime minister was elected at 39. We have a government with the lowest number of ministers (only 16), besides being the youngest, and the one with the highest number of women who also have crucial portfolios.

Are we happy with it?

Definitely we are, also because we are sure they will give fresh impetus to change in our country, a country which has the oldest leading class in Europe: 59 years being the average age, with peaks of 67 for bankers, 63 for full professors in universities, 61 for managers in public companies...

The first thing young parliamentarians did was to establish a Young MPs intergroup (a sort of caucus) and they started to operate right away, organizing events and initiatives at national and European level.

At national level let me also mention the initiative held in Rome to launch a new challenge for social and economic development and to build, or better rebuild, confidence in the project of European integration. The event involved young parliamentarians from all over Europe. The initiative outcome was the launch of the Young European Legislators network. Participants also adopted a "declaration of intent", requesting that the institutions of the Member States and of the European Union and, in particular, the European Commission recognize the network as an counterpart representing young European citizens; they also set up a plan of action on several issues, including:

-Promoting the integration of a flexible and secure European labour market ;

-Implementing and strengthening the European Youth Guarantee to combat youth unemployment;

- Consolidating and strengthening the Erasmus+ programme and, in particular, the European Voluntary Service to foster a shared sense of European identity.

Going back to the Italian Parliament, let me add a few words on yet another important change it underwent: the share of women MPs rose from 20 to 31 %. And many of them are also young women. We have to encourage them as they are faced with many challenges even more so when it comes to young women. All of us are victims of stereotypes, discriminatory behaviours, lack of resources, but young women are even more discriminated against, because they are young, they are women and they also have family commitments. And when they can “afford” to have a family at all, their burden is much heavier than the one older generations of women used to bear.

Rejuvenating policy involves many things and actions, let me stress one in particular: rejuvenating politics means empowering young women through a set of measures ranging from access to services like kindergartens in parliament to “decent” working hours, leadership training, paternal leave leading to shared responsibilities when it comes to family care and domestic work...

At the beginning of my speech I said that rejuvenating politics is a must, but rejuvenating and engendering politics is the best indeed.