



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

### Intervention by

#### **Ms. Mourine Osoru, member of parliament (Uganda) and President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU**

*Opening of the General debate of 137<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly, 15 October 2017, Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation.*

Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Ms. Valentina Matvienko, Chairperson of the Council of the Federation,  
Ms. Margaret Mensah-Williams, President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians,  
Ms. Rita Itsák-Ndiaye, Member of the UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Distinguished guests,

Dear colleagues,

We only need to turn on the television or read the latest news to realize that inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue are needed more than ever before. Intolerance, discrimination and inequalities are fueling misunderstandings, conflicts and extremism in many parts of the world.

In my view, we have 5 weapons to advance inter-ethnic and inter-faith harmony.

The first is dialogue. Dialogue is a strong weapon against alienation, segregation and hate. But it comes with non-negotiable rules. Dialogue should be open. It should be inclusive, transparent and genuine. It should leave no one behind, and it should be impartial.

Tolerance is another weapon. Tolerance is not only a behaviour, it is a way of being that needs to be taught, experienced and practised in the family, at school, in the community and in our institutions. Tolerance is the basis for understanding. We cannot ignore the diversity of the human race. No one should be punished or abused for having a belief that is different from that of the majority. The fact of belonging to a certain ethnic group should not pre-determine a person's place in society.

Empathy is our third weapon. Images that we see on television of people dying, people being expelled of their homes, and people being misreated should not become normal. Empathy for the suffering of others should instead lead us to refuse to accept the suffering of people.

Knowledge is another weapon. As ignorance nourishes hate, education and access to information for all is fundamental to empower openness and understanding among people beyond their differences.

Equality is the fifth weapon. Providing equal opportunities to all is an antidote to marginalization, alienation and radicalization. It is also a warranty of fair and sustainable development that is centred on people and that benefits all of them.

Dear colleagues,

As you know, young people are particularly exposed, through online platforms, to propaganda from extremist ideologies and are vulnerable to becoming alienated and radicalized. We must pay special attention to this risk and make sure that young people within our national territories,

even if they are non-citizens,  
even if they are migrants in irregular situation,  
even if they belong to ethnic and religious minorities,  
are not left behind!

We must ensure that we provide young people with the best conditions under which they can take part in political life, and make them feel that they have a voice and a place in society.

A recent IPU research paper on linkages between youth participation and peace and security found that involving young people in parliaments' decisions can help to promote social cohesion in societies affected by conflict or political instability. Youth participation can even increase trust in the government to bring about social change through non-violent means. Governments, parliaments and international organizations are increasingly using young MPs as mediators to resolve community and other conflicts, including inter-faith and inter-ethnic conflicts.

Here we are, as young parliamentarians of the IPU, ready to work together with all of you to advance peace and harmony!