

*Speech by CLAUDIA ROTH,  
Vice-President of the German Bundestag,  
for the opening of the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting at the COP23  
on 12 November 2017  
in Bonn*

*Check against delivery!*

Mr Bainimarama,  
Ms Luveni,  
Ms Cuevas Barron,  
Patricia Espinosa,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many speeches begin in this way and in some cases it may be just a platitude.

But I really mean it, dear colleagues, when I say  
what a great honour and pleasure it is for me  
to welcome you all on behalf of the German Bundestag –  
to the “parliamentary wing” of COP23,  
the biggest intergovernmental conference  
ever to take place in Germany.

It is really encouraging to see  
how many representatives from parliaments across the world have come together here in  
Bonn –  
and that the tradition established in Paris  
of us as IPU delegates working together to play a pro-active role in climate conferences  
is being continued again this year.

I view this involvement of parliamentarians as decisively important:

We, as members of parliament, represent the beating hearts of our democracies,  
we parliamentarians are the legislators –  
and for the implementation of the  
Paris Agreement,  
for this issue of global survival,  
this is precisely what is needed:  
intelligent,  
far-sighted,  
ambitious legislation.

The urgency of this is plain for all to see.

2016 was the third year in a row  
in which global average temperatures were the highest on record.

The concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere rose last year more quickly than  
ever before,  
and is today higher than in the past three to five million years.

For millions of people across the world, climate change has long ceased to be merely a  
theoretical phenomenon:  
it means a failed harvest or water shortage,  
flooding or a heat wave,  
it means the immeasurable suffering of losing their homeland.

And here in Europe too, which we believed was safe,  
extreme weather events are becoming increasingly common,  
whilst the sea level is constantly rising.

In other words:

The existence of climate change is scientifically proven,  
the human factor is not *fake news* –

and, overall, meeting the “well-below-two-degree goal” is perhaps the biggest challenge facing humankind.

In this context, the signature of the Paris Agreement was without doubt a milestone.

Yet true historical significance can only be measured retrospectively,; it does not materialise merely by signing an agreement, but by actually implementing it.

That is why we must now work together to achieve a true turnaround in the battle against climate change.

In Paris, we defined what global responsibility means – now, we must demonstrate this sense of responsibility.

And, colleagues, this is only possible if we all address the issues with determination, but also give each other mutual support.

Tackling climate change is not a merely technical affair, it is first and foremost a challenge to be addressed on the basis of our “common but differentiated responsibility” – meaning not least that solidarity from wealthier countries is required, and that climate change must finally also be understood as a question of social equity.

Naturally, it is vital that sufficient resources are mobilised for the relevant funds – yet this is not all that is needed.

In particular, I believe we have the worldwide task of recognising and combating climate change as a challenge which particularly affects those countries that, **FIRSTLY**, have done the least to contribute to climate change, **SECONDLY**, are already faced with severe poverty and inequality,

THIRDLY, therefore have the least resources for adaptation –  
and where FOURTHLY climate change poses a particular threat for certain groups:  
for women and children,  
for older people,  
for those with disabilities.

For they are the ones  
who suffer most  
when living conditions become ever more difficult,  
when climate change increasingly frequently forces people to flee their homes.

That is why, colleagues:  
here in Bonn,  
it is ALSO a question of equity.

Equity among the individual countries of the international community,  
equity within our societies –  
but also: intergenerational equity.

We have only borrowed the earth from our children –  
this is the leitmotif of the environmental movement here in Germany.

And this sentence is more relevant than ever today.

After all, future generations have not contributed to climate change,  
yet they will be the ones to suffer if we hesitate.

So let us not hesitate,  
for we are the first generation  
that is feeling the effects of climate change,  
and also the last generation

still able to really change something.

So this is the task we face,  
and this is where I believe that we in parliaments have a special role to play,  
one of the many strengths of parliamentary democracy:  
We have the opportunity,  
we have the mandate  
to be the voice of citizens,  
the legitimate and legitimised representatives of the majority and the minority –  
not least of individual communities,  
whose physical resource base already today risks literally becoming submerged,  
yet whose concerns risk being overlooked in the negotiations.

At the same time, we parliamentarians here in Germany for example  
can seek direct dialogue with colleagues in states like Fiji and Nepal,  
Chad and Kiribati,  
in countries like Bangladesh –  
and defend their climate-related interests as an integral part of our work,  
of our legislative responsibility,  
of our OWN responsibility.

That, surely, is exactly the spirit and purpose of today's conference.

That is precisely the goal which the IPU has set itself –  
and, ultimately, it is the responsibility which we all share.

This brings me to the last and perhaps most important point  
that I would like to make today:  
that of our own responsibility.

Of course it is tempting

to be satisfied with initial successes,  
to point the finger of blame at others,  
to postpone the many difficult decisions to a later point in time.

But that is not what we were elected for.

We were elected  
to address the biggest challenges.

And this includes ensuring that  
the policies of our OWN countries,  
that OUR production and consumption  
no longer lead to poverty  
or inequality,  
no longer contribute to the over-exploitation of natural resources –  
neither at home or elsewhere.

That is why it is OF COURSE of paramount importance  
that we in Germany not only support other countries in tackling climate change,  
but also OURSELVES meet our climate goals for 2020, 2030 and 2050;  
that we phase out fossil-fuel power completely,  
switch to 100 per cent renewables  
and usher in a transition both in the transport and agricultural sectors.

We here in Germany,  
we here in Europe  
and, yes, also in the countries of North America and many other regions on this planet,  
have the technical and financial resources,  
bear the historic responsibility as part of the global community  
to set an example in the fight against climate change –  
to work on the basis of solidarity with you and everybody else,

to be steadfast in our own policymaking,  
in full awareness of our global interdependence.

This should be our path,  
the path of us all.

For it is only if we all pursue this path together,  
from Paris to Marrakesh and now Bonn, towards a decent future,  
that we will not leave anyone behind –  
neither our fellow humans  
nor our planet  
nor, vitally, future generations.

In line with the IPU's motto:  
*for everyone.*

Thank you.