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## SPEECH BY SIEGFRIED BRACKE, SPEAKER OF THE BELGIAN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ladies & Gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,

I'd like to say a few words about parliamentary communication.

Before I was an MP - before 2010 - I worked for almost 30 years as a political journalist for tv.

As a journalist - because of my deep belief that in a democracy everybody is concerned - I always wanted to bring politics to people, and especially those that are not really interested in politics. And I can say we were at that point rather succesful.

The broadcast asked me in 2006 to make a direct tv-program on the weekly plenary session of Parliament. And I did. The program is still running and is rather popular.

Strange but true, the key to its succes is that the plenary session is not broadcast uninterruptedly. Why? Well, simply because these sessions - like it or not - are not good enough to be put on screen as such. At least if we want to have a sufficient number of viewers.

Not good enough because of far too long speeches, written by collaborators, and read very often by people that haven't

learned to read out loud. Bookish and learned language, and - of course ! - nobody is listening.

And those who occasionally might do in front of their screens, they think: these MP's speak a lot, but what do they say actually? They're busy, but doing what?

I hope, dear colleagues, that some of you do not recognise their own parliaments in my not that flattering description. But I'm afraid a lot of us, amongst them I myself, must admit that this is sometimes or even often how it is.

Let me put it quite directly. In the 21st century the question is whether we show in a convincing manner that parliament is busy with what really is going on.

I'm not quite sure...

I see for instance that in my country the parliamentary program still needs someone assise who explains what was said, whether it was important or not, and if so, why.

Can't we do any better? Can't we do without supplementary explanation? Of course we can. By, for instance, making sure that mp's limit their time of speech. As we do here... By limiting the content of what they say to one or two items, instead of giving a review of the world.

Some of you might think that Parliament should not obey the laws of the media. I'm afraid they're wrong. The parliamentary democracy of the 21st century has to create broad participation. And like it or not, we will have to adapt, because we must be heard and seen. Parliamentary

democracy is worth the money, but people must have the opportunity to check and control.

Parliamentary work is of course more than plenary sessions. Our work in committees should be thorough, extended and conscientious. Our voters deserve that we make good laws, they deserve good governance.

But the plenary sessions have the importance of bringing the great summary. (And in a summary, we skip the details.)

The summary of the choices of majorities, and the objections of oppositions.

The plenary sessions of our parliaments should be top items on tv and on the internet. I really think that this again is building the world the people want.

Thank you for listening.

**Siegfried Bracke**

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