

31st August – 2nd September 2015
4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament
General debate - "Placing Democracy at the Service of Peace and Sustainable Development:
Building the World the People Want"
- Speech by the President of the Bundesrat, Mr. Bouffier -

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

For some people, it comes from the heart.
For others it is a purely rational matter.

In both cases, however, one thing holds true: if you enter into a genuine partnership you will not only be better equipped to brave the storms of life, but will also have much more promising prospects for the future.

Partners are people we can rely on. Partners back us up when it really matters. We reach out our hands to a partner – because we manage better together, because we can achieve more together.

This idea also underpins the assertion that we must at long last establish a global partnership for sustainable development. Fifteen years ago the Millennium Declaration was adopted right here. It was a groundbreaking move, pointing the way to a world without hunger in the future.

On the eve of the Millennium Declaration, the Speakers of Parliament met for the first time: they focussed on how to contribute to a better, more democratic world. They focussed on finding answers to the question of how parliaments must function if members of parliament wish to be not merely legal representatives of the electorate but genuine advocates, true partners of the people.

As the President of the Bundesrat, and thus as the highest-ranking representative of federalism in Germany, my experience has often been that partners can achieve more together. Our system in Germany is often described as cooperative federalism. Rightly so!

German federalism can look back on a long tradition. However, after the Second World War, the experiences of the National Socialist terror regime led us to consciously opt for federal structures in our country once again. To ensure that power is shared. In a federal system, alongside the vertical division of power, we have an additional, horizontal division of power – between the Federation and the federal states. That protects against abuse of state power.

And – our cooperative federalism has further benefits too. Each of our sixteen federal states has state status. That means that all the decisions about specific problems are taken as close as possible to the place where the problem arises – on the spot, in the regions, in the federal states. Politics in action as close as possible to the people. Political partnerships in everyday life too.

In addition, we have committed to creating equal living conditions right across Germany. For example, we use a system known as the Federal Financial Equalisation System. The more prosperous federal states make additional payments to adjust imbalances if other federal states cannot generate sufficient revenue. And, take my word, that is really not always easy. I am the Minister-President in

one of the three federal states that often need to give the other thirteen federal states a helping hand. However, I am also convinced that our federalism is the reason for our success in Germany, both on the economic front and in fostering innovation.

We work together. We think in terms of cooperation. People all over Germany are equally entitled to have a good standard of living. In Europe too we strive to smooth out the differences, to achieve genuine partnership. How wonderful it would be if that also held true for the whole world.

Thinking regionally and cooperating globally. I can only endorse the Post-2015 Agenda's call for a global partnership for sustainable development. Let us work together in the world, for then we will also develop sustainably, to the benefit of all. Let us trust in the partnership-based, participatory vigour of our parliaments, for then we shall create THE world that we want. And that world will be a better place.

Thank you!