



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians

Closing Session

Mr. Saber Chowdhury

Lusaka, 17 March 2016

Mr. Patrick Matibini, Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia,
Mr. Rapporteur,
Colleagues and friends,

Over the last couple of days, you have come together to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing the planet. I come away from this Conference more optimistic, and hopeful that the future ahead is bright. I am optimistic because of what you, young parliamentarians and leaders from all over the world, have told me over the last two days. You have convinced me that you are ready to lead the way and to make sure a safer, more equitable, and more inclusive planet becomes a reality. I am left inspired by your enthusiasm and forward-looking ideas. I feel reassured that the future and the present will be in good hands with leaders like you at the helm.

During this Conference you covered a broad range of topics, from advancing equality, equity and rights, to addressing climate change, economic models, and the need to bring future generations to the table. You engaged in interactive conversations and lively debates. You used digital technologies and social media to bring all of us in this room closer together, and to broadcast our voice all over the world.

The culmination of this Conference is the outcome document: it is full of bold ideas. It stresses that young people are not an afterthought, but are indispensable key players who must sit at the top table where policies and legislation are crafted. It also underlines that in order to achieve *The Future We Want*, we must calibrate our tools of implementation to ensure that we leave no one behind. This doesn't just apply to young people – who are in themselves an extremely diverse group. But it also applies to women, minorities, indigenous peoples, those with disabilities, and those living in poverty.

The outcome document also reflects your discussions, ideas, and proposals on the concrete action that parliamentarians can take to bring these objectives to fruition. It highlights:

- The need for greater representation of young people in parliaments and in the work of the IPU;
- The need for youth to lead the way in bringing about a people-centred approach to development. One that identifies target groups through good disaggregated data, and one that directs its efforts at improving all peoples' lives, especially those most vulnerable and marginalized.
- The imperative to support young populations in a holistic way so that they are enabled to lead. That means addressing discrimination and inequality, as well as providing greater resources through which young people can receive quality education, health care, justice, and ecological security. This comprehensive rights-based approach is not just needed for young people's well-being. We also need it so that young people are equipped to effectively apply their talents and energy to creating a more sustainable, equitable, and more prosperous world for the benefit of all, and for future generations.

In many ways, this Conference is about youth taking ownership. That means that the outcome document is **your** document. It is written by **you**, it is **your** how-to guide on taking action, and it is **your** declaration for the rest of the world to hear.

This Conference is one part of the youth wave that is taking over Lusaka and the global parliamentary community this month. As you know, over the next few days, the IPU will hold its Assembly right here. The theme of its General Debate will be *Rejuvenating Democracy: Giving Voice to Youth*. This theme is weaved together with that of this Conference. For by empowering youth to lead the way in the implementation of the development agenda, leaving no one behind, and embracing their enthusiasm, talents and leadership in using digital technologies that reach out to citizens, we will concurrently be rejuvenating our democracies and bringing it closer to the people.

There is no better way to build on the momentum of this Conference than by applying its lessons to the wider parliamentary debate. I encourage you to ensure that the ideas, perspectives and proposals made at this Conference are promoted in your parliament's delegations to the Assembly and become part of the mainstream public debate in your home countries. I will also make sure that I bring up your ideas, perspectives and proposals in my work during the Assembly and beyond. At this Conference we have given a voice to young people. Let's make sure this voice is heard and that it echoes widely.

There are many people who had a hand in making this Conference a successful one. I would like to offer my sincere thanks to the National Assembly of Zambia. Staff at the Assembly worked day and night with the IPU to host this Conference. I also wish to thank all of our guests and panellists who participated in our activities. They all brought a richness of expertise and enthusiasm to the Conference, and served as a source of knowledge and inspiration for us all. A particular thank you goes to our special guest, Mr. Alhendawi, the UN Secretary-General's Representative at this Conference and his Envoy on Youth. I would also like to thank Mr. Vinay Nayak for his inspiring speech and all the other youth representatives who shared their vision for the future with us this week.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank you, young parliamentarians, leaders, and activists. You brought this conference to life. You worked together devise solutions to some of the world's most pressing and complex problems. We all come from very different countries, with very different cultures, circumstances, and contexts. But despite these differences, there is much that brings us together:

- We are all here to serve the people. By bringing their views and concerns to a larger forum, we help to ensure that their rights are protected, their well-being is improved and their expectations and aspirations are met.
- We are here because we want to help direct humanity's path towards greener pastures. We want to bring about a world that is just, safe, fair and sustainable for us, our children, and future generations.
- We are also here because we want to contribute to solutions. We want our voices to be heard so that our ideas can benefit others.

Despite our diverse backgrounds, there is clearly so much that we have in common. Let us harness this vision of *the world we want*, and unite in solidarity. Together, there is no limit to the height of our ambition. As you go back to our countries to get to work on these objectives, remember that there is a large community of like-minded contemporaries and more senior leaders, all standing beside you, ready to help.

Thank you.