

J.C. Lund's speech at the 122nd IPU Assembly

President.

My fellow parliamentarians.

It is an honour and a privilege to stand before you today, speaking on such vital and important matters as the hope for political reconciliation and good governance.

As a representative from Denmark – one of the smallest countries in the world – I wonder: what can we, as parliamentarians do against the lack of will for political reconciliation and freedom and the staggering reports of political oppression, injustice and inequality, which run like a plague over large parts of the world.

My answer is that we can do a great deal. And we must do a great deal. This strong belief has been deeply rooted in the Danish foreign policy and development aid for decades. Denmark has always been one of the world's leaders on development aid and support for strong democratic governments. It is based on the idea that good governance,

freedom and equality foster a strong civil society, reconciliation, peace and prosperity.

In the face of political oppression or the hard work for reconciliation, we must strengthen our democratic values. We must secure every individual's right to vote, to speak and to live. We must cast away the idea that torture and death are the right answers. It will not give us reconciliation, but will leave a state crippled and despotic. We can not and we must not leave our citizens imprisoned in refugee-camps inside or outside the country, and we must secure that no country will. The right of the individual person is the most important asset in the world. Therefore Denmark is for freedom of speech everywhere. We're for freedom to worship everywhere. We're for freedom to learn for everybody. And so we are for freedom from tyranny, everywhere, whether in the guise of political oppression or economic slavery or religious fanaticism. In Denmark we will always support every step towards reconciliation and oppose any step of political oppression and violence. We have a responsibility to protect our citizens and we must avoid any form of state violence. In a world where wars are fought to prevent terrorism, we must also be aware of violence committed

by states. Either because of religious beliefs or political opposition. We have to accept that this form of state terrorism is as dangerous and troubling as any other form of violence committed. And it is terror, when a state targets civilians living in refugee-camps, it is terror, when you arrest and torture demonstrators uttering their democratic voice of hope and change, it is terror when you deprive your citizens of the basic security in life. We must never fight any political or religious opponents with violence. The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral. Returning violence with violence only multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. We have a responsibility as parliamentarians, as statesmen, as humans to protect any citizen, whether they are political supporters or opponents, domestically and abroad. We must never meet challenges with violence and oppression. That is what defines good governance, democratically and morally.

In Denmark we believe that hope is real. In a life of trials, in the world of challenges, hope is real. In countries where families are without basic security, where people live in refugee-camps because of their democratic beliefs or religious beliefs, where

some are without food, and some don't even have a home to speak of, hope is real. In a time of global chaos and instability where our faiths collide as often as our weapons, hope is real. We live in cynical times, but hope is not up for discussion. Hope is what gives us the courage to take on our greatest challenges, to move forward together. We must as parliamentarians and as international communities embrace these challenges together, we must move towards good governance and political reconciliation everywhere together and we must move forward as a community together. Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful and committed people can change the world. Because this is the only thing that ever has changed anything. There is such a thing as false science, there is such a thing as false promises. But there is no such thing as false hope. There is only hope.

Thank you for your attention.