

PSIA Graduation 2026: Speech Arancha González, PSIA Dean

Part I

Dear Class of 2026 – I can feel your excitement!

Two years ago, I welcomed you in the city of the Olympic Games and quoted Carl Lewis: *"It is all about the journey, not the outcome."* I told you not to just focus on the gold medal — but to also make friends, to enjoy Paris, to have fun.

Well, Class of 2026 — you have had the journey. And now we are reaching the moment of the gold medal.

Before we start with the ceremony, let me thank your families and friends who have accompanied you in this journey and who are here to celebrate with you today.

As well as those who could not join you today but are cheering for you from home;

Merci aux familles et amis ici présentes ;

Gracias a todas las familias y amigos aquí presentes;

They deserve our thanks!

This is a proud moment for you, but also for all of us who have been with you through the good days and the hard moments; for our committed faculty, for Mark, the academic advisors, assistants and the rest of the PSIA team, for the entire Sciences Po family; from all of us, big congratulations.

After so many months at Sciences Po, this institution has become your home. And like any good home, it has shaped you: gently sometimes, by challenge at others.

Within these walls you have built new bonds, made new friends, built relationship that you will carry through your lives;

And you have learnt a lot.

You have learnt that at a time defined by uncertainty, your greatest strength is not what you know but how you decide.

You have understood that at a moment when power is being redistributed - between states, technologies and societies - your task is not to fear but to shape.

You have experienced how when the world accelerates, staying principled is what will set you apart.

You are now entering a world where every problem is interconnected and therefore complexity is not an obstacle, but rather your natural environment.

And above all, you have come to realise that international affairs is not just a career. It is trust. You will make decisions that affect people who may never know your name. Honor that responsibility.

But, let's face it, it wasn't always easy. There were moments when the world outside these walls made it hard to stay focused on what matters within our walls. Days when the noise was overwhelming and the foundations we take for granted felt shakier than they should.

Because the world outside has been - is very, very loud.

You may have watched Bad Bunny open the Super Bowl this year by listing every country in the Americas, one by one, out loud, in front of a hundred million people. Not as a set-list. As a statement. Because sometimes, on the right stage, naming things that are being forgotten is itself an act of power.

So let me name what matters in international affairs, the principles that some try to quietly abandon while the world is distracted:

- International law
- Human rights
- Climate justice
- Open trade
- Nuclear non-proliferation
- Gender equality
- Development cooperation
- Governance
- Information integrity
- Democracy.

Seguimos aquí - We are still here.

These principles are not relics. They are not electives. They are the very foundations on which prosperous, secure and peaceful societies are built.

In a growingly fragmented world, your task will be to help societies understand each other. To be translators of these principles in international affairs. And remember, translation is power.

One of your very first challenges at the beginning of your journey with us was to build the tallest, most beautiful structure you could from marshmallows and toothpicks. Some stood. Some did not. But at that moment, you were already practising the instinct that will define your careers: the belief that you can work together to build something stable, enduring, and worth standing for.

The new international order will not build itself. It will need architects trained to think across borders, argue with evidence, hold competing truths without losing their compass, stand firm when it matters most, and build coalitions not just echo chambers.

I am fully confident that you are the architects that the world needs today.

So dear class of 2026, without further ado, let the moment you have been waiting for begin.

Part I

This ceremony is coming to an end

But before you leave let me offer a few thoughts in the hope that they can help you in the future.

I have been hearing that “*2026 is the new 2016*”. And I get it: Justin Bieber is back on your playlists, and apparently so is everything else from that year.

A decade ago, in 2016, the world experienced a massive geopolitical earthquake. We saw Brexit, a paradigm-shifting U.S. election, and deep global fractures. Back then, people coped by hunting virtual monsters on *Pokémon GO* or freezing in place for the Mannequin Challenge. Today, our culture is looking back at 2016 through rose-tinted glasses, craving what feels like a simpler time.

But as Masters in international affairs, you know the truth. 2016 wasn't simple. It was the volatile baseline of the world we live in today. And while the rest of the internet is looking backward, your job is to look forward.

The world you are entering is grappling with a new kind of anxiety. We are navigating the rise of artificial intelligence, shifting global alliances, and a deep craving for authenticity. Algorithms can draft policy briefs and analyze data at lightning speed. Some wonder if technology will make our roles obsolete.

But here is my promise to you: AI cannot look a counterpart in the eye and build trust. An algorithm cannot feel the deep cultural empathy required to prevent a conflict. It cannot share a meal, read a room, or sense the unspoken hesitation of an adversary during a late-night negotiation. Nor can it make the heavy ethical choices required to save human lives. 2016 taught us how fragile our global systems are. 2026 is your opportunity to rebuild them.

You are entering the world not just with a Master's degree, but with the irreplaceable human skills that no machine can replicate: emotional intelligence, cultural nuance, critical spirit and the courage to make tough ethical choices.

So let the internet chase the aesthetics of the past. Your mission is to shape the reality of the future with compassion, courage, commitment and coherence.

The world has never needed you more.

This ceremony has come to a close;

On behalf of all of us at PSIA – faculty, academic team, central support services, the technical teams that have made this event possible, Mark and myself - let me wish you all the best for the future.

Congratulations Class of 2026. Fly high!