



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

144th IPU Assembly

Nusa Dua, Indonesia
20-24 March 2022



Opening remarks by Mr. Duarte Pacheco, President of the IPU

20 March 2022

Your Excellency, Mr. President of the Republic of Indonesia,
Madam Speaker of the House of Representatives,
Mr. Secretary General,
Fellow parliamentarians,
Distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

It is my great honour to address the inaugural ceremony of the 144th IPU Assembly. As we gather here in Nusa Dua, on behalf of everyone present, let me thank the Republic of Indonesia and its House of Representatives for the warm hospitality and excellent conditions provided for our global gathering.

Dear Friends,

We are at a crossroads. We are in the third year of what has been a devastating pandemic on so many levels. Over six million people around the world have lost their lives, and countless others continue to suffer in its aftermath. The progress made over many years in reducing poverty and inequality and advancing towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been severely challenged and in several instances unravelled. There is ample evidence that women and young people have been particularly affected by the economic and social consequences of a health crisis of a magnitude not experienced by humankind in over a century. The road towards sustainable recovery will be long and hard.

Despite all the challenges, as parliamentarians we have tried hard to play our role in securing better lives for our people. Just last year, we met in Vienna for the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, at which we solemnly pledged to exercise parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers for the people and the planet. Meeting shortly thereafter in Madrid for our 143rd Assembly, we acknowledged the many contemporary challenges to democracy and committed to taking robust action to preserve the rule of law, human dignity and fundamental freedoms, the basic principles that underpin world order.

And yet, as we meet today, world peace and our global community are shaken to the core. In blatant violation of international law and the commitments we have painstakingly tried to reach, a member of our international community – not just any country, but a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council armed with nuclear weapons – has invaded another country, bombed its cities and is bringing about a humanitarian catastrophe at a scale that the world has not experienced since the Second World War. The calls of the United Nations, the IPU and the global community at large for an end to aggression, compliance with the rule of law and the resumption of diplomacy have yet to be acknowledged.

#IPU144

There may be serious disagreements and security concerns that need to be addressed. However, launching a large-scale war against an independent and sovereign State is inexcusable. The human toll of this military action, especially in terms of loss of innocent civilians, is unacceptable. The threat of the use of nuclear weapons and the targeting of nuclear power plants is irresponsible. As clearly stated by the IPU Executive Committee in its statement of 26 February, this invasion needs to stop, and it needs to stop now.

We call on the Parliament of the Russian Federation, a long-standing Member of the IPU - which hosted us in St Petersburg just a few years ago and led our discussions on dialogue for peaceful coexistence - to step up and help find a peaceful solution. We also call on all IPU Member Parliaments to pursue channels of communication with Russian parliamentarians with a view to putting an end to this violence and devastation. The IPU, for its part, stands ready to assist to the best of its abilities. We call on all parties to ensure full compliance with humanitarian and human rights laws, including the prohibition of all forms of sexual violence.

If history has taught us anything it is that in war those who pay the price are the ordinary people. This is true in Ukraine but also in Russia where sanctions will ultimately lead to greater poverty, inequality, and despair. I launch here a clarion call for us to revert to the vision of our founding fathers Cremer and Passy and give dialogue a chance as the best way to resolve disputes. The IPU should offer a cradle for such dialogue, which should take place in a calm and level-headed manner.

We need to move ahead, restore peace, and focus on the many other global challenges that demand our urgent attention. At this Assembly, we will be adopting what we expect to be a landmark resolution on *Rethinking and reframing the approach to peace processes with a view to fostering lasting peace*. Needless to say, this resolution is timely and highly relevant, as we see that the 20th century tools of diplomacy are no longer deploying their full effectiveness. We need to rethink and retool the mechanisms and processes of our international system, starting with the UN Security Council and its voting system, which is preventing it from carrying out its core mission of safeguarding world peace. We need robust democracy more than ever before, as an antidote to war, injustice and suffering. This means inclusive decision-making processes that put the people at the centre. These processes must also ensure that women and youth are duly represented, both nationally and internationally.

Dear colleagues,

At this Assembly we shall also be addressing the urgent matter of *Getting to zero: Mobilizing parliaments to act on climate change*. As you are well aware, this is a priority area of action for the IPU, as reflected in our new Strategy for 2022-2026. We have all agreed that, in order to uphold the multilateral consensus and accelerate the green transition globally, we need to make progress on the Paris Agreement, accelerate decarbonization and even reduce the carbon footprint of parliaments themselves.

The time to act is now. Time is running out. Scientists and researchers from all over the world have documented what has been described as an atlas of human suffering and a damning indictment of failed climate leadership. In 2019 alone, storms, floods and other extreme weather events displaced more than 13 million people across Asia and Africa. Rising heat and drought are killing crops and trees, putting millions of humans worldwide at increased risk of hunger and malnutrition. Roughly half the world's population currently faces severe water scarcity during at least part of the year.

In any crisis, existing inequalities tend to rise. The climate crisis is no different. So, we need to ensure that mitigation strategies empower the powerless and disadvantaged. We are meeting in a region which is home to many extremely vulnerable communities. I regret that we are not able, for a variety of reasons, to have with us today many representatives of small island developing states in the Pacific. As we embark on our deliberations, we must be mindful of the need to pay attention to and address the existential threats these communities face as a result of the climate crisis. It is our responsibility to give a voice to the voiceless, adapt our responses and learn from past experiences. We know for instance that women and girls face increased levels of violence in climate-related crises. So let us make sure that combatting gender-based violence is part and parcel of our approach to this issue.

This 144th Assembly must mobilize us all. We must lead by example and take resolute action before it is too late. Colleagues, let us not fail our citizens and the young generation, who have placed their trust in us. Through our new Strategy, we have pledged to hold ourselves accountable for the implementation of the commitments we have made. At this Assembly, I invite you all to contribute to the accountability segment which has been included as part of the programme, and showcase how you have been able to turn words into action to bring about positive change.

Just a few months ago, the IPU took stock of the situation of the human rights of parliamentarians around the world. The results were dire: in 2021 alone, the IPU was called upon to deal with human rights violations perpetrated against 673 MPs from 44 different countries. This is the highest number ever recorded in the history of our Organization. While this is a grim reality, the IPU's successful push for the release of several arbitrarily detained MPs shows that we – that you – can make a difference. Indeed, so many of your parliaments have taken concrete steps in support of our colleagues at risk across the world. At this Assembly, I would urge you all to continue to show this kind of parliamentary solidarity. We will be discussing later at this Assembly the ongoing plight of our colleagues in Myanmar and Afghanistan. I am confident we will come away more resolute in our efforts to help, including the particularly precarious situation of Afghan women and children.

We are reminded that, as parliamentarians, we need to do a better job in responding to the needs and expectations of our citizens. In just a few days' time, we will be hearing a presentation of the new Global Parliamentary Report – a joint initiative of the IPU and UNDP – on public engagement in the work of parliament. I urge you to examine the findings and recommendations of this Report, drawn from the successes and good practices of our peers from many parliaments, and see how we can best integrate these into our own work at the national level. In turn, the IPU will pursue its efforts and work, leveraging the potential of parliamentary solidarity and expertise, to build capacity and support parliaments in delivering better for the people. The Handbook on parliamentary support for emergency preparedness, which we will also be launching at this Assembly, will no doubt help build our collective capacities to contribute more effectively to global resilience in fighting health pandemics, beyond the one we are currently facing.

In order to bring about positive change, we also need to assess our own performance and tirelessly continue to innovate, rejuvenate and improve. We must not be complacent but rather push ourselves to make sure that we are on the right side of history. As part of this change, let us all redouble our efforts to reach gender parity and make confident steps in better engaging youth in politics – including by joining the IPU campaign, I Say YES to Youth in Parliament.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Fellow parliamentarians,

I look forward to engaging with you all in the coming days.
I look forward to a very good and productive Assembly, of which we can all be proud.

Thank you.