



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Duarte Pacheco, IPU President

Inaugural ceremony for the Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue

Marrakech (Morocco), 13 June 2023

Your Majesty, King Mohammed VI of Morocco / Your Royal Highness, XXX
Mr. Secretary General,
Honourable Speakers and Members of Parliament,
Distinguished representatives of religions, beliefs, faith-based civil society organizations and academia
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you all at this inaugural ceremony of the Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue: Working together for our common future. And what a delight it is to be here in the beautiful and historic city of Marrakesh. I wish to thank the Parliament of the Kingdom of Morocco for hosting this unique event at the Palais des Congres. It is a moment of nostalgia for the IPU to be back in this venue, where we held our 107th Assembly over twenty years ago.

Your Majesty/ Your Royal Highness, we are grateful for your presence, which we interpret as a testament to your country's commitment to interfaith dialogue. Morocco has a long history of coexistence between different religions and beliefs. Our Conference stands in a long line of distinguished interfaith events which have been hosted here.

Before I offer my brief remarks, I would also like to acknowledge our other distinguished partners, especially Religions for Peace, who have worked with us closely throughout the preparatory process. The United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the Mohammadia League of Religions Scholars have further supported the preparations of a strong, varied and inclusive programme.

Friends, when we look around at the state of the world today, I think we can all agree that something needs to change. We have emerged from a long pandemic to find what? A world that is suffering from a crisis of solidarity. Where the rule of law, the foundation of our societies, is becoming more fragile.

We are beset by many crises: armed conflicts, increasing inequalities, the climate emergency and ecological degradation – to name just a few. No country is unaffected. Each of you has a story to tell. These are complex problems which require joint solutions.

Religion and belief are important to many people. They influence our identity, values and decision-making processes. They affect how people participate in society. Because they matter to our constituents, they must matter to us as parliamentarians – their representatives.

Even though parliamentarians and religions and beliefs have different mandates, they share the common goal of serving their communities and promoting their wellbeing. They could be allies in our common cause for social justice and peaceful coexistence.

Ladies and gentlemen, the motto of this Conference is Working together for our common future.

And what better place to begin, than with encouraging dialogue, a core mandate of the IPU.

In the past decade, the IPU has been continuously addressing issues of inclusion, coexistence and peace in its work:

At the 127th IPU Assembly in Quebec City in 2012, parliaments recognized the importance of balancing respect for diversity with social inclusiveness. These were tools for building trust, progress and prosperity.

At the 137th IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg in 2017, our Members recognized that dialogue with faiths, cultures and ethnicities is essential to peace and cultural pluralism.

At our recent 146th IPU Assembly in Manama, parliaments acknowledged the importance of dialogue, education and awareness-raising as tools for countering intolerance and fostering inclusion and peaceful coexistence.

I believe we are doing something historic today.

When I look in front of me, I see a truly diverse group. In addition to our parliamentary community, represented by over 60 high level delegations, we also have government officials, leaders of religions and beliefs, representatives of interreligious councils, faith-based organizations, academia and other civil society organizations.

We have gathered here today to look at how our collective experience can be harnessed for the betterment of society. Times of crisis and uncertainty especially call for solid leadership to bring people together around a common vision of the future.

There are many fruits that can come from this dialogue. As parliamentarians, our work can benefit from stronger consultation mechanisms with broader society. We can strengthen anti-discrimination legislation ensuring equal treatment for all under the law. We can develop parliamentary mechanisms to promote interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

With one voice we can all speak out for more solidarity, moderation and inclusion. We can advocate for the upholding of fundamental human rights such as freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, freedom of assembly and freedom of expression.

My friends, you are welcome here. In the spirit of the IPU, we are engaging in a meaningful dialogue that is anchored in human rights and our common desire to work for a world in which no one is left behind.

I wish you all enriching deliberations in an atmosphere of respect, a curiosity to learn and a willingness to share.

Thank you