

UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA



PARLIAMENT OF TANZANIA

**STATEMENT OF HON. DR. TULIA ACKSON (MP), SPEAKER OF
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF TANZANIA ON PROMOTING
PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES:
FIGHTING INTOLERANCE**

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P. O. BOX 941
DODOMA**

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Hon. Chair;

Hon. Speakers;

Hon. Members of Parliament, Dear colleagues and friends.

At the outset allow me to take this this opportunity to thank the Rt. Honorable Duarte Pacheco, the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), for inviting the Tanzania Parliament to participate in this important assembly. It is a personal honor for me and all MPs in my delegation. Also, I would like to register our Delegation's appreciation our hosts and organizers of this august assembly for the excellent arrangements made to make this meeting a success.

Dear colleagues and friends

The theme for this Assembly's general debate: "**Promoting Peaceful Coexistence and Inclusive Societies: Fighting Intolerance,**" comes very timely. In the world we live in today, intolerance in growing in our societies, the world we live in today, is full of diversity. Thus, the need to talk about inclusivity and peaceful coexistence. In order to promote coexistence many factors come into play. One of the important ways of ensuring coexistence is to have resilient institutions that will look into factors that generate diversity and have mechanisms to address challenges that emanate from "negative diversity", for surely, as we all know, diversity is not necessarily adverse.

Dear colleagues and friends,

There are definitely many key players in addressing diversity: first and foremost, communities, through their traditions, customs and societal values. These will then form the basis for other set ups to create a conducive environment for ensuring that these values and aspirations of society are upheld. One of the institutions that carry this responsibility is Parliament. If I may take an example of my own country, the United Republic of Tanzania, I wish to refer to a number of factors (or key drivers) of diversity and how these may shape the nature of coexistence and inclusivity that our communities envision. As said before, diversity is not necessarily negative. What may be negative is if diversity is used to bring disunity or affect the core of societies.

The URT is a country of more than 120 tribes (or ethnic communities), with different languages, customs and culture. In this regard diversity is richness. But if not well managed it can be a source of disunity. So, one of the early steps that were taken right after independence was to forge national unity. We cherished, and still cherish, diversity, but we had to ensure that our country was built as one nation. This was done through looking at the points of divergences or causes of adversaries in the society and devising ways to address them:

Firstly: to fight tribalism and community differentials emanating from the use of various languages, we adopted the use of Kiswahili language as our uniting language for the nation. Kiswahili has developed from literally most of the languages widely spoken in Tanzania. We got independent in 1961, to date, Kiswahili is a national language spoken by about 100 percent.

Secondly, we understood that illiteracy and poverty was high and threatened the unity of the nation and peaceful coexistence of the people. The government, very early after independence, till to date, continues to provide fee - free primary and secondary education and, though limitedly - loans for tertiary level education. This has enhanced

peaceful coexistence and improved cohesion of the society. This has levelled the space for all the people in Tanzania opening more or less equal opportunities in employment, political space and improvement of people's financial capabilities.

Thirdly, on the understanding that religious beliefs have, in some places divided nations and societies, Tanzania adopted secularism and constitutionally have allowed her people to believe and practice their religion freely without interference. Today, we have large Muslim and Christian communities in Tanzania and they all work together, respect each other, and participate in each other's events. There are also discussions between the leaders of these religions. At times, there have been open air discussions between the two religions and our societies have been able to tolerate the differences and appreciate each other. There is no discrimination or marginalisation on the basis of religion in Tanzania.

These few examples, plus others, have assisted to making social services accessible to all (health, education, water) not just a privileged few; ensuring gender equality; addressing poverty, thereby promoting peaceful coexistence in Tanzania, and thus, fighting intolerance, and building inclusive societies.

Dear colleagues and friends,

That said, it's important for our respective Parliaments to ensure that the Governments are properly advised on the adoption of policies and implementation of programmes that promote coexistence. At the same time, Parliaments should pass laws and oversee regulations that promote inclusiveness, fight intolerance. This includes criminalising incidences, actions, speeches that divide our societies.

This must be done timely, on time, early enough, before any escalation!

Hon. Chair, Hon. Speakers, Members of Parliaments, Dear colleagues and friends,

I wish to thank you for your kind attention.