

My name is Keiichiro Asao. I am a member of the House of Councillors of Japan and deputy leader of our delegation.

Gaining credibility and the trust of the public is a most important mission for parliaments around the world. No parliament can claim to be a peaceful, just, and enduring institution without first establishing its credibility. We parliamentarians should demonstrate our accountability by improving transparency. And if we want the public to accept our policies, we must be able to present a clear vision of the future. This is especially true given the challenging times in which we are living.

Democracy for everyone is the slogan of IPU. And my goal as a politician is to make Japan a country where everyone can achieve self actualization. I want to create a society where opportunity is everywhere. But the most difficult part of doing so is that we cannot force people to have dreams, nor can we force them to make those dreams come true. Having ample role models in society is important, too, because role models inspire people to believe that they can make their dreams come true.

Which is why it is so important for we parliamentarians to gain the trust of the people. Without trust, the people will not listen to what we say. And it is also important that we become good listeners.

This past May, the House of Councillors conducted a survey using the IPU Toolkit for Gender Sensitivity. I am confident that this was a clear step toward more broadly based representation. I am very proud to know that the next president of the IPU will be a woman from Africa.

We live in an era facing numerous challenges such as climate change, food and energy security, Russia's aggression against Ukraine, and the recent difficulties in Gaza. If we are to bring democracy to everyone and ensure that no one is left behind, then we must transcend differences in politics and ideology without relying on the use of force. If we are good listeners, we can understand where those differences exist. And this will lead to negotiation rather than the use of force.

Our Prime Minister Fumio Kishida emphasizes the importance of the ability to listen. This ability to listen will strengthen the public's trust in parliament and other government institutions. If we parliamentarians across the world had better ability to listen this will lead to the solutions to the global challenges that we face. Eventually, it will lead to the formation of a free and open international order based on the rule of law which Japan is willing to contribute.

The IPU is a unique organization that brings together 179 of the world's parliaments to work jointly on an equal footing, and I sincerely hope to build good and worthwhile relationships with all of you here in this assembly.

Thank you for listening.