

Address to 148th IPU Assembly

By
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Under The Theme:
**Parliamentary Diplomacy: Building Bridges for
Peace and Understanding**

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Parliamentarians, Distinguished Colleagues,

There is a permeating unease engulfing the world right now. Off the heels of a global pandemic that brought the world to its knees, we are seeing a rise in tensions and conflict across the globe.

From the Russian aggression in Ukraine, to the brutality in the Middle East, there are problems that demand the urgent attention of the international community. There's much to be done to meet the test of the moment, a test that only the international community working together -- can choose to overcome.

At the heart of this test and at the root of the world's challenges -- is one defining question: Will the international community come together to reject the cancer of conflict?

Colleagues,

This is why it is a distinct honor of mine to be here at the 148th IPU Assembly as a young

parliamentarian. The matters we discuss here affect the lives of billions of people across the globe today, but the decisions we make here, will affect billions of people across the globe tomorrow.

With 56 countries experiencing armed conflict in 2023 – the IPU Assembly provides a much-needed space for parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy at the global, regional and bilateral levels.

I'm from the Caribbean, a region known for its beauty, its peace and its stability; however, at this very moment, we are dealing the growing instability and conflict in Haiti. We are also grappling with the existential threat Guyana faces to its territorial integrity.

The problems in our region demand urgent attention and we seek the support from all nations of good will.

The situation in Haiti in particular is dire, and it gets worse by the day.

If Haiti isn't yet formally deemed a failed state, it's well on its way. Government institutions and basic services have broken down and gang violence has sparked one of the worst humanitarian and refugee crises in the Western Hemisphere.

In Haiti right now, living conditions are deteriorating rapidly with widespread hunger, insufficient access to clean water, school closures, and reports of mass murders and sexual assaults. Beyond the international headlines about anarchy and lawlessness in the capital Port-Au-Prince, it is children, especially girls, who are particularly at risk.

Many describe the conditions as akin to living in a war zone.

Haiti desperately needs the support of the international community.

We, in The Bahamas, know, we understand, and we too feel an overstretched international community reluctant to tackle yet another crisis - but the reality is - an unstable Haiti

besets an unstable Western Hemisphere - and an unstable Western Hemisphere besets an unstable world.

We in The Bahamas are now on the front lines of this humanitarian crisis. We have become a place of refuge for over 80,000 Haitians. We see boats of hundreds of Haitian migrants come to our shores on a weekly basis. With a local population of just 350,000 people, our schools, our healthcare system, our social safety net are now all stretched to its limits.

Our neighbors in the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean at large and even in The United States to feel this burden.

The problems in Haiti are decades in the making - some may even say centuries in the making.

The problems were not caused by us - Haiti's neighbors - but it is us who have been left to deal with it alone.

Haitians are our Caribbean brothers and sisters but they too are citizens of the world, human beings, who deserve to live in peace and with dignity.

With all that's going on in the world, Haiti feels like a forgotten crisis. But we will continue to keep raising our voice, especially for those children and girls struggling to survive. We need the international community to step up their response now, so we don't reach the point of no return.

Fellow Parliamentarians,
It was a breath of fresh air being amongst other young parliamentarians in the Young Parliamentarians Forum.

While we recognized very real threats to global stability, it was clear that collectively, we choose hope over fear. We see the future not as something beyond our control, rather we see the future as something we can shape for the better, together.

Young people are often left out of the conversation, but I am pleased that here at the IPU there is a concerted effort to ensure that the voice of youth is heard.

Youth are the most dynamic segment of any population. They are innovative agents of change whose contributions, if taken seriously, can change the trajectory of history. Working with young people, forces institutions to think of the future and to think of the extraordinary potential of people.

Fellow parliamentarians,

Even in the midst of contrary views of the Opposition at home, the government of The Bahamas is steadfast in our foreign policy of active engagement.

Under the present administration in The Bahamas we have renewed our commitment to work closely with our Caribbean neighbors and other small island developing states around the world, on issues that matter to us,

such as climate change. We have also renewed our commitment to work closely with other developing nations to increase trade focusing on vulnerable populations such as women and youth.

We know that is it only through cooperation, friendship and multilateralism can the world realize true peace, stability and prosperity.

To all nations of good will who want to see a future of friendship, cooperation and the building of bridges for peace and understanding, In The Bahamas, you have a friend.

As we say in the islands, God Speed! We wish you peace, stability and prosperity.

Thank you.