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General Debate on the theme "Harnessing Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) for a More Peaceful and Sustainable Future"

Distinguished colleagues, esteemed delegates,

The rapid advancement of technology has transformed the way we live, work, and govern. At the same time, we stand at a pivotal moment in history, where science, technology, and innovation (STI) hold the key to unlocking immense potential, but also pose risks that could intensify global inequalities and tensions.

The role of STI aligns with several of the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, notably **SDG 9** on industry, innovation, and infrastructure, and **SDG 17** on partnerships for the goals. But it is also deeply connected to **SDG 16**—the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. As we reflect on these goals, we must focus not only on the opportunities STI offers, but also on the ethical responsibility to ensure that its benefits are shared equitably, leaving no one behind.

Let me highlight a few key areas where parliaments have a critical role to play.

One of the most pressing challenges is the growing **global technological divide** between the developed and developing worlds. While many nations enjoy the benefits of cutting-edge technology, millions still lack access to basic digital infrastructure.

Parliaments have the responsibility to advocate for **policies that promote equitable access** to STI, ensuring that advancements in technology benefit all segments of society, particularly **women, youth, and marginalized communities**. This includes investing in digital literacy, expanding broadband infrastructure, and encouraging public-private partnerships to support technology transfer to developing nations. The IPU's work in promoting **Science for Peace Schools** is an excellent example of how inclusive educational initiatives can turn potential conflicts into opportunities for peaceful coexistence.

As we embrace the potential of technologies like **artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and automation**, we must also be vigilant in managing their risks. These technologies have transformative potential, but can lead to **technological unemployment, data privacy issues, and even misuse for malicious purposes**. The dual-use nature of many technologies—such as AI being used for both civilian and military applications—raises complex questions about security and governance.

The **IPU Working Group on Science and Technology** and its efforts on the **draft Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology** provide a roadmap for creating ethical frameworks that ensure technology serves humanity.

Another critical area for parliamentary action is addressing the **socioeconomic impacts of technological change**. As automation and AI transform industries, there is an increasing risk of **job displacement**, particularly for vulnerable groups. In line with **SDG 8** on decent work and economic growth, we must ensure that our economies adapt to these changes in a way that protects workers' rights.

Parliaments should focus on programs to help workers transition to new jobs in the digital economy. We should also support policies that promote **STI education for women and young people**, as well as **gender equality in STEM fields**. Women's participation brings diverse perspectives that are essential for addressing complex global challenges.

Dear colleagues,

As we look to the future, we must recognize that **STI is not neutral**—it can either be a force for good or a tool of division. It is essential that we insert **ethical considerations** into all STI policies to ensure that technology is used to promote peace and human rights. This includes creating safe online environments to prevent **cyberbullying, harassment, and cybercrime**, particularly for women and marginalized groups.

My country, **North Macedonia**, understand the value of peacebuilding through technology because we have seen how **innovative solutions** can be leveraged to resolve conflicts and rebuild communities. By fostering **science and technology collaborations**, we can turn potential sources of conflict into opportunities for dialogue and cooperation.

Finally, parliaments must enhance their capacity to **utilize scientific evidence in lawmaking and oversight**. Mechanisms that improve **communication and collaboration between scientists, policymakers, civil society, and the private sector** are vital. As parliamentarians, we can play a key role in facilitating these dialogues and ensuring that our legislative work is grounded in sound, evidence-based research.

In conclusion, science, technology, and innovation have the potential to bring about a **more peaceful, just, and sustainable future**—but only if we act responsibly, inclusively, and ethically. As parliamentarians, we have the responsibility to ensure that **STI serves the common good** and addresses the urgent global challenges we face.

Thank you.