



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.



150th IPU Assembly

Tashkent, Uzbekistan (5–9 April 2025)

Speech by Dr. Tulia Ackson, IPU President

Inaugural Ceremony of the 150th IPU Assembly

Tashkent, 5 April 2025

Your Excellency, Speaker of the Senate of Uzbekistan, Ms. Tanzila Narbaeva,
Your Excellency, Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan, Mr. Nuriddinjon Ismailov,
Mr. Martin Chungong, distinguished Secretary General of the IPU,
Honourable Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Parliament,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to the 150th IPU Assembly!

This is a historic gathering. I feel great honour and pride to preside over the IPU in a year of such important milestones: at one hundred and fifty Assemblies, parliamentarians from every continent have answered this Organization's call, stepping forward to engage in political dialogue, seek channels of cooperation and help make this a better and more peaceful and democratic world, with opportunities for genuine progress for everyone, everywhere.

At the same time, we are commemorating four decades of tireless advocacy for gender equality and leadership by the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians. In this context, our presence in a country with a fellow female Speaker of Parliament is especially meaningful. With almost 80% of the world's Speakers being men, female leadership in parliaments remains an exception. Parity is still a distant goal, so every example of strong female leadership is a powerful statement of progress and a call to action for further change to achieve equal representation in politics.

Furthermore, for the first time in history, our Assembly is convening in Central Asia. I invite you to see this as a reflection of the IPU's promise to its Member Parliaments: as a truly global institution, we shall endeavour to bring this Organization closer to every single region of the world.

So, to our gracious hosts in the Republic of Uzbekistan, to His Excellency President Mirziyoyev, who will be addressing our Assembly on Monday, to Their Excellencies Madam Speaker of the Senate and Mr. Speaker of the Legislative Chamber, and to every single person here whose warmth and hard work have made us feel at home – thank you, *Rahmat!* I offer you my deepest gratitude.

Esteemed colleagues,

While the 150th IPU Assembly is marking the milestones I just mentioned, it is also a moment for deep reflection that needs to lead to concrete and forward-looking outcomes. We must candidly recognize that plenty of work still lies ahead of us.

First, concrete parliamentary action on *Social development and justice* – the theme of our General Debate – is urgently needed. We know this is no time to rest on our laurels, and we will not do so.

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Please consider these very stark facts:

- After decades of steady gains, progress in reducing poverty has stalled in recent years: about 720 million people – roughly 9% of the world – live on less than \$2.15 per day. At the current pace, we are way off track to meet SDG 1 of ending poverty by 2030. Inequality has become an inescapable reality: the wealthiest 10% of individuals in the world now claim 52% of global income, while the poorest 50% survive on just 8.5%.
- Job insecurity is also deepening. Globally, two billion workers still depend on informal, precarious employment without protections or social security. Inflation and economic instability have weakened workers' purchasing power, pushing decent work further and further out of reach. The year 2022 marked the first time in the 21st century that real global wages fell.
- Social exclusion persists on a shocking scale, as numerous groups face systemic discrimination – on the basis of gender, ethnicity, age, religion or disability, to name only a few factors. Women continue to face profound barriers, with labour force participation stuck at 47%, compared to 72% for men, and the global gender pay gap persists at 20%.
- Young people are particularly vulnerable to precarious work: global youth unemployment remains several times higher than adult unemployment, and youth are more likely to be in the gig economy or in temporary jobs.

These are only a couple of examples among many others. Above all else, I would like to invite you to think about the realities *beyond* these mere statistics. Please picture the human lives, the real families, the communities, and the individuals that we have pledged to serve and who continue to suffer as their basic social needs remain unmet.

Our role as parliamentarians compels us to address these challenges with empathy and a real commitment. Thirty years ago, in Copenhagen, world leaders articulated a powerful vision: social development must place human dignity at its heart. The 1995 Copenhagen Declaration remains just as relevant today. Now, as we prepare for the Second World Summit for Social Development in Qatar later this year, we have a unique chance to deliver a substantial parliamentary contribution to this debate.

Social development and peace are deeply intertwined, forming a virtuous circle where one reinforces the other. Without peace, social development simply cannot take root. At the same time, social progress strengthens peace and security, aligning closely with the principles of human security and common security that we hold dear at the IPU: true peace can only be achieved when individuals are free from fear, want, and indignity, and when no nation's security comes at the expense of another's.

Honourable parliamentarians of the world,

I hardly need to remind you that we are living in exceptionally dangerous times, with conflict, violence, and instability gripping multiple places, such as the Middle East, Ukraine, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Sahel, and Myanmar.

Multilateral institutions, once thought of as unshakable pillars of global stability, now face paralysis. Geopolitical divisions run deep, and trust among nations wears thin. Yet, if peace is to prevail, it is multilateralism – and *not* isolationism – that must endure and thrive.

In this regard, we need to move beyond outdated and obsolete 20th-century Cold War mindsets, where one nation's gain is seen as another's loss – where the world is divided into competing blocs. Parliamentary diplomacy is a valuable tool in this effort: when States hesitate and tensions rise, when governments build walls, when armies exchange bullets, and when mistrust spreads, parliamentarians can still build bridges and open lines of dialogue.

Your voices represent diverse peoples, cultures and perspectives, of course. Yet, through the simple but profoundly powerful act of speaking and listening to one another, we can come to realize that the hopes and dreams of the communities we represent have far more in common than

some would have us believe. By fostering trust and extending a hand when others are crossing their arms, we can reveal solutions and compromises that benefit everyone and uphold everyone's human rights. Dialogue does not erase differences, but it paves the way for understanding, cooperation, and the possibility of peace.

Indeed, parliamentary diplomacy embodies the very essence of democratic dialogue. And democratic dialogue is too important to fail – peace is too precious to lose!

Dear friends,

As I mentioned earlier, we are celebrating our 150th IPU Assembly. Throughout this event, over 700 MPs from across the globe will engage in rich discussions, both formal and informal.

But, without wanting to sound too alarmist, **none of this will matter if we no longer have a planet to stand on.** We will not have another 150 Assemblies to address climate change; time is a luxury we simply no longer have. *Full stop.*

But the good news is that solutions lie within our grasp. Parliamentarians hold in their hands the power to legislate for a sustainable future. We can enact ambitious climate laws, approve budgets that prioritize green investments, and hold our governments accountable for meeting the Paris Agreement and climate commitments to transition away from fossil fuels into a green economy. Our role is crucial in closing the gap between global discussions and tangible national actions.

Indeed, the IPU was founded on the belief that parliamentary action can – and must – transform our world for the better. Your work around the world has repeatedly demonstrated this conviction. You have witnessed personally how parliaments effect change, how good laws can lift millions out of poverty, how careful scrutiny prevents abuses, and how daring diplomacy promotes peace.

More than ever, we need you to act. This 150th Assembly is your moment to strengthen bonds of cooperation, commit to deeper engagement, and propel legislative leadership forward.

Let us grasp this opportunity. Let us vow to take action for social development, justice, peace and a sustainable planet.

As I said, parliamentary action is a synonym for democratic action; it is collective action. And today, at our 150th Assembly, let it also be *urgent, courageous and emphatic* action.

As representatives of our peoples, we carry their aspirations for peace, justice, and a greater, fairer future.

We will not let them down!

Thank you.