



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

T +41 22 919 41 50  
F +41 22 919 41 60  
E [postbox@ipu.org](mailto:postbox@ipu.org)  
[www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)

Chemin du Pommier 5  
Case postale 330  
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex  
Geneva – Switzerland

## Speech by Dr. Tulia Ackson, IPU President

Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue: Strengthening trust and embracing hope for our common future – Opening remarks

Rome, 19 June 2025

Excellencies,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Esteemed religious leaders,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

It is a great honour to address you as the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global organization of national parliaments.

I would like to thank our gracious hosts, the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of Italy, for welcoming us to Rome. It is quite a remarkable thing for us to be here during this Jubilee year, to have the privilege to sit in your magnificent debating chamber for two days and to meet with leaders of religions, beliefs, civil society and international experts from around the world. This Conference provides us with an opportunity to discuss how we, as legislators, alongside all other actors of goodwill, can work together for our common future. And then for us all, people of all religions, beliefs and faiths, to attend an audience with the Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, united in our joint commitment to the common good.

But why are we, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, instigating this conversation between national parliaments and representatives of the global religion and belief community? And why now?

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is not only the global organization of national parliaments, it is the oldest political multilateral organization in the world, and has been around for 136 years. The IPU has seen the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the first and second world wars, the creation of the League of Nations and the United Nations, the breakdown of colonialism, the emergence of modern nation States, the Cold War, and every other global conflict, natural disaster and moment of triumph and loss since 1889. Our commitment throughout all of this has been to be a convener, to provide a platform for dialogue for the sake of peace and for the promotion of democracy, for everyone.

But dialogue cannot take place in echo chambers. And democracy thrives on inclusivity and vibrant exchange.

The IPU's current Strategy encourages parliaments to engage with their broader ecosystems, with all of society.

That is precisely what this Conference aims to do.

We recognize that we are facing very difficult times. Our societies are being torn apart by different crises – conflicts are being fought both online and offline, with words and with weapons. It is not just our common future that is at stake: it is our here and now. We are being called upon to come together not just to safeguard a future for our children, but also to protect the rights and livelihoods of our parents and peers.

Parliamentarians have an essential role to play in the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. It is our job to uphold the rule of law, human rights and justice through our functions of representation,

oversight, budgetary approval and legislation. Recently, we have begun to speak more of a fifth function of MPs – parliamentary diplomacy. This is a tool to leverage the potential of our networks and expertise, beyond national borders, to promote dialogue, understanding and cooperation, and even to mediate conflicts.

Representatives of religions and beliefs are important dialogue partners for parliamentarians. Religion and belief provide answers to many questions: they inform our values and give our lives meaning. Religious leaders are people of influence and religious organizations care for the needy and elderly, and educate our children.

Ladies and gentlemen, political and religious actors may have different mandates, but we are all concerned citizens, and are united by shared values such as peace, respect, equality, humanity, fraternity, sorority, accountability and compassion, as well as a commitment to working for the good of our constituents, congregants and broader society.

Many of us here today are leaders in our communities. As our societies become more fragmented, it falls to us to be responsible guides, and advocates of justice and peace.

Gathered here in Rome, we will seize this unique opportunity to see how dialogue can inform national policies and legislation, how we can identify avenues to uphold the equal rights and dignity of all, and how we can combat all forms of hatred and discrimination and foster social cohesion.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to express my appreciation for how far many of you have come to be here today, and to recognize your belief in the importance of talking across national, party and religious lines, and of sharing your expertise for the common good.

I would like to ask all of you here today to make three commitments for your time at this Conference:

- Be willing to listen, because in every exchange there is a space for learning
- Be willing to share, so that others may benefit from the expertise in which you have invested so much
- Be ready to reach out. The pool of expertise here is exceptional. Our experts will spark your curiosity, but one short speech from the podium cannot satisfy it. I urge you to connect with each other and draw on the wealth of talent that is assembled here today.

In the last week, as we have watched with great sadness and concern the escalation of hostilities in the Middle East. The closed airspace has also prevented a number of parliamentarians, panellists and young people, many people working for peace in difficult circumstances, from being with us today. I hope that their forced absence may give us even stronger impetus in our deliberations for peace.

I want to wish you all fruitful deliberations.

My greatest wish for this Conference is that we can work together in a space of mutual respect and in the spirit of our common humanity.

I thank you for listening.