

Madam President, Excellencies, dear colleagues,

We gather at a moment of profound turmoil—when conflict, inequality, environmental collapse and democratic backsliding threaten the very foundations of peace, justice and prosperity. And yet, precisely because of this turbulence, our shared commitment to multilateralism and parliamentary cooperation has never been more urgent.

From the vantage point of Iceland—a small state in a turbulent world—we know that international cooperation is not a luxury. It is a necessity. We rely on a rules-based order, on the integrity of international law, and on inclusive institutions where all voices are heard and respected, regardless of size or power. These principles are not abstract ideals—they are lifelines for global security and human dignity.

And this is where parliaments come in.

Parliaments are the voice of the people in the international system. We scrutinize governments. We ratify treaties. We shape budgets that fund climate action, peacebuilding, gender equality and human rights. And we are uniquely positioned to connect the local and the global—bringing international commitments home and holding leaders accountable for delivering them.

I am very proud of Iceland's recognition of the self-determination of the State of Palestine, already in 2011; thus

In a world shaken by horrific war—in Ukraine, in Gaza, in Sudan, in too many places—parliaments must be engines of diplomacy. We must use our platforms, bilaterally and multilaterally, to insist on ceasefires, to demand respect for humanitarian law.

In a world fractured by inequality, we must put inclusion at the center. That means economic justice, climate justice, racial and gender justice. It means protecting civic space and media freedom. And it means ensuring that young people, women, indigenous and marginalized communities are not just spoken for—but empowered to speak for themselves, including within our own institutions.

Multilateralism must evolve to be more transparent, more participatory, and more democratic. That includes strengthening the parliamentary dimension of international cooperation. The IPU has a critical role to play here.

Let us not be naïve about the scale of the task. But let us not be cynical either. The challenges before us are immense—but so is the legitimacy of people-powered institutions. Our parliaments, and this global forum of Speakers, must be platforms of courage, of solidarity, and of foresight.

In Icelandic tradition, we say: “*Margur er knár þótt hann sé smár*”—“Many are powerful though they are small.” That holds true for nations, for individuals, and for acts of moral leadership.

Let us rise to that responsibility—together.

Thank you.

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