

Speech by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr Theodoros Rousopoulos
General Debate: "A World in Turmoil – Parliamentary Assembly Cooperation and Multilateralism for Peace, Justice and Prosperity for All"

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6th WCSP

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

When I decided to leave behind a successful twenty-year career in journalism and enter politics, a fellow journalist asked me:

"Why would you do this to yourself?"

He meant: why take the risk of damaging the professional reputation I had built in my country?

Politics has always carried a certain level of public discredit. But today, we are witnessing a more dangerous trend — a coordinated attack on the very idea of politics itself.

It spreads through anonymous accounts, through social networks, and now through artificial intelligence and the mass production of fake news.

What is equally worrying is not just the content, but how easily it is believed.

The serious politician is losing ground to the populist — the one who focuses primarily on personal survival in power.

Younger generations no longer value democracy the way those who lived under authoritarianism once did.

And when democratic values fade, new forms of authoritarianism inevitably rise.

I come from Athens, Greece — the birthplace of democracy.
But democracy is not heritage. It is a decision made daily — a choice of law over impulse, duty over self-interest, the common good over personal ambition.

People need someone to trust. And trust is not built with words — it is built through example.

A politician with no life experience cannot sense the daily injustice felt by those excluded from power, opportunity, or voice.

A politician who has never failed cannot teach hope.

And a politician who puts self-interest above service cannot lead with integrity.

Too often, politicians fall into the trap of flattery — saying what people want to hear, making promises they cannot keep.

And when those promises collapse under the weight of reality, something even more fragile breaks: the public's trust.

How, then, do we protect democratic space?

By returning to the values behind the word **T.R.U.S.T.:**

- **Truth:** The foundation of public confidence and responsible leadership.
- **Responsibility:** To serve not ourselves, but the common good.
- **Understanding:** Empathy for others, rooted in experience and listening.
- **Sacrifice:** The courage to put principle above popularity.
- **Transparency:** To lead with openness and accountability.

To build trust with the citizens we serve, we must work hard.

The same applies to the trust between us — which is not always easy,

especially in this historic international organisation that brings us together briefly and symbolically here in this beautiful and iconic room.

I hope that in the bilateral meetings we all hold on the margins of this session, and in the debates taking place in other rooms of this building, we may create the conditions to resolve some of the large and small crises facing IPU member states.

This gathering reminds us of something simple but essential: that it is always worth trying to talk again — even about the difficult things — with one another.

Thank you.