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Opening speech

Ms. Cynthia López Castro
President, Bureau of Women
Parliamentarians

Opening of the General Debate
*Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting
humanitarian action in times of crisis*
151st Assembly

19 October 2025, 11:00 a.m.

Madam Vice-President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Mr. Secretary General,
Dear colleagues,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great honor to address you today as President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

We gather at a moment of peril. The humanitarian framework built over decades is in danger.

We are witnessing not only the violent displacement of millions of people, but also the violent displacement of an order based on rules by an order based on power, transactional politics, and clientelism.

In such a reality, are we repeating the 1930s descent into global anarchy and horror? Or are we seizing an opportunity to renew commitment to multilateralism and peace?

Humanitarian crises are harmful for everyone, but they are even more hurtful for women:

- In humanitarian fragile settings, every single day, 500 women and girls die from pregnancy and childbirth.
- 60 per cent of those who face food deprivation and hunger are women and girls. They are the first to sacrifice meals so that children or elders might eat.
- In warzones, sexual violence continues to be used as a weapon killing women and forever affecting survivors physically, psychologically, and socially.

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That is why our response to the harsh reality of war cannot be gender blind.

Gender-responsive humanitarian action is not a “women’s issue.” When humanitarian action works for women, it works for everyone. When it fails women, it fails us all.

We must uphold humanitarian values without compromise.

Beyond reaffirming commitments, we must ensure that humanitarian law and norms are upheld and that they are implemented through a gender lens. Decisions on priorities must be taken in parity with men and women at the table.

We must also protect humanitarian action by preserving funding.

Gender-responsive humanitarian budgeting is not a cost. It is an investment in breaking cycles of violence, preventing instability, and fostering recovery that benefits all.

We must advance a multi-sectoral and inclusive humanitarian agenda.

Today’s crises are not isolated—they are related to Climate disasters, pandemics, food insecurity, and the rise of new weapons systems and technologies. Addressing them requires women at the table and gender equality at the center.

Colleagues,

Let us fight for humanitarian values, norms, and laws and anchor our fight in vision, guided by parity, equality and sustainability.

Thank you.