

Excellencies, Honourable Colleagues,

We convene in Geneva not merely to deliberate, but to shoulder responsibility: responsibility to our peoples, to the principles of humanity, and to the verdict of history. In this chamber, words carry weight only when they are matched by deeds.

Across the world, human suffering deepens. Families are uprooted, communities are left without food, medicine, or shelter, and conflicts drag on without end. Natural disasters and emergencies compound these burdens. Amidst such turmoil, the most elementary rules of humanity are too often disregarded.

Let there be no ambiguity: humanitarian norms are not a matter of choice. They represent the minimum expression of civilisation. International humanitarian law exists to shield those who cannot shield themselves in times of armed conflict. Human rights law, by contrast, always accompanies every person — in peace and in war alike — affirming the dignity that is inherent in us all. Together, these two bodies of law form a

single moral compass, guiding us unfailingly towards humanity.

Yet law, if not enforced with courage, is fragile. The strength of humanitarian norms is not measured by the number of treaties signed, but by the resolve to uphold them when it is most difficult. And here, parliaments bear a solemn duty. We are the ones who must give effect to international obligations through legislation. We are the ones who allocate resources for humanitarian action. We are the ones who hold governments to account when commitments are made abroad but not honoured at home. Above all, we are the voice of conscience — reminding the world that no ideology, no calculation, no interest can justify the abandonment of human dignity.

Permit me to share an experience from my work as Chair of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law. I was recently seized of the case by the Secretary General of the IPU to go into the urgent matter of the former Deputy Speaker of Afghanistan, who is threatened with deportation from

Pakistan to Afghanistan, following his exile from Afghanistan in 2021 following the Taliban Government taking over Afghanistan. I contacted both the former Deputy Speaker of Afghanistan Amanullah Paimar and also the Speaker of the Parliament of Pakistan Sardar Sadiq Ayaz to find a solution to this case. Till now, I was assured by the former Deputy Speaker of Afghanistan that he was contacted by the Office of Pakistan that a meeting will be arranged between the Deputy Speaker of Afghanistan and himself and till now no meeting has yet been settled. I hope that this important case will be solved at the earliest as other fellow Afghani refugees in Pakistan are being deported.

Yes, the process took its course, and I followed it closely. I hope soon it will be resolved. But allow me to speak plainly: I do not know this Afghan colleague personally, yet I understood what his life must mean to his family. He is my brother. He is your brother. In truth, we are one family.

And if anyone, in any circumstance, is to be judged for his actions, then let the law take its

course. But let it be enforced as it is meant to be: with fairness, with dignity, with humanity. For me, every single life counts.

If we are sincere in addressing the immense humanitarian challenges before us — the displacement of millions and the urgent need of hundreds of millions more, as outlined in the concept note guiding this debate — then fine words will not suffice. We must move from declaration to implementation, from rhetoric to strategy.

A beginning might be made through a joint initiative to reinforce the protection of humanitarian workers in conflict zones — those who deliver food, medicine, and hope where none remains. To advance such work, I propose that this Assembly establish a **parliamentary task force** — a body charged with designing strategies, harnessing collective expertise, and monitoring implementation. In this way, our deliberations here in Geneva may be translated into lifelines for those in peril.

Yet strategies must be accompanied by enforcement. Governments are bound not only

by signature, but by scrutiny. It falls to parliaments to ensure compliance: through legislation that incorporates international obligations into national law; through oversight that holds the executive to account; and through budgets that safeguard humanitarian action even in times of austerity. Enforcement also arises through parliamentary diplomacy itself — through the quiet but firm pressure we apply when we remind governments that humanitarian law is not a matter of convenience, but of duty. And ultimately, enforcement lies in accountability before courts of law, where violations of the most fundamental norms must never pass without redress.

If we are to uphold humanitarian norms and safeguard humanitarian action, the Inter-Parliamentary Union must assume its natural role: that of convener. Our strength does not lie in standing apart, but in bringing others together. We amplify the voice of parliaments, we reinforce the authority of international law, and we ensure that humanitarian principles are translated into action at the national level.

To do so, we must work with those who are most effective in their domains: with the International Committee of the Red Cross — the guardian of humanitarian law; with the United Nations — the legitimate coordinator of global humanitarian effort; and with our regional parliamentary assemblies — which anchor these norms within every region of the world. I must here thank the Red Cross for their immediate and rapid intervention in securing the release of the hostages held by Hamas on 2 separate batches last Monday of the other week, where the handling was done by the Red Cross both in Gaza City and Khan Younis. Thank you, Red Cross, indeed.

Together, these partnerships form a chain of responsibility: law, coordination, and political will. The Inter-Parliamentary Union must stand at the centre of this chain, lending it strength and continuity.

As Nelson Mandela once reminded us: *“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity, it is an act of justice.”* I would submit to you today: protecting

human life in conflict is not a gesture of goodwill;
it is the most basic act of justice.

Let us depart from Geneva with this conviction:
that in defending the weakest, we defend the very
essence of humanity.

I thank you.

