

Respect for humanitarian norms and support for humanitarian actions  
in times of crisis

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

Allow me to express my pleasure at the opportunity to deliver a speech  
on such a significant topic.

All of us gathered here know that international humanitarian law  
represents not merely a legal instrument but also the moral compass of  
humanity.

The protection of life, health, and, more broadly, of the integrity of  
individuals—whether in the context of armed conflicts or natural  
disasters—must be an imperative for the actions of states within whose  
borders any form of suffering or hardship of the population occurs, as  
well as for the entire global community. The world is globally  
interconnected and globally vulnerable. And this does not mean that it  
is vulnerable solely in the context of the risk of conflicts spilling over  
or the emergence of problems that might locally threaten other nation-  
states. We all know that a single local war can trigger food shortages  
on the other side of the world, and a single natural disaster can cause  
the migration of millions of people. However, that is not the only aspect  
of vulnerability I am referring to. Its very essence is fragile! The  
essence of a world in which global interconnectedness does not mean  
merely easier access from one end to the other, nor simply easier  
linking of people, ideas, and information. Vulnerable is the essence of  
a world founded on the idea that we are all, together and individually,  
connected by a global destiny of the time we inhabit. The globalisation  
of the world has made us powerful—more powerful than ever before in

the history of humankind—and yet such power has also made us more vulnerable than ever!

I am confident that each of you gathered here today shares with me the same sense of sorrow whenever you witness human suffering on any continent, whether it be ongoing low-level conflicts, civil wars, floods, droughts, or the disenfranchisement and fears experienced by any inhabitant of our planet. That is why it is important that today, here, we are all united in the same efforts to be at least part of the solution to a problem far greater than the individual parliaments and states we represent. Resolving such a problem requires nothing less than our unity, despite all our individual differences!

Esteemed colleagues,

I address you today as a member of the Delegation of the Republic of Serbia to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, and also as one of you who wishes—and is convinced—that together we can serve as a reminder of what diplomacy truly is: an act of responsibility towards humanity!

Respect for humanitarian law depends not only on states' courts and governments but also on their parliaments, because parliaments are institutions that represent the voice of the people and act as guardians of the rule of law. For more than a century, the IPU has consistently reminded us that respect for international humanitarian law is not a choice but an obligation for all of us.

The responsibility of the individual is reflected in understanding the world we live in, while the responsibility of international and interparliamentary organisations lies in coordinating assistance and responding to crises.

According to the United Nations' Global Humanitarian Overview, by the end of May 2025 nearly 300 million people worldwide were in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Multiple crises have been marked by systematic violations of international humanitarian law, including those with catastrophic consequences for civilians. During the same period, approximately 295 million people faced acute food insecurity; sexual violence, particularly against women and girls, was extremely widespread; and there was also an increase in the number of children affected by armed conflict. Furthermore, attacks on healthcare facilities affected vital care for millions of people during the first months of 2025. Finally, in light of the climate change we are witnessing, 2024 has proven to be the hottest year on record.

In a world faced with such complex crises, no national parliament can act in isolation. Multilateral cooperation is of crucial importance, as it represents not only the scope of our joint activism but also a test of our shared humanity.

Esteemed colleagues,

Respect for humanitarian law is not merely a matter of legal norms, although these norms constitute the essential mechanism through which we can curb, contain, and overcome such adversities! We have a moral duty, through our engagement, words, and actions, to be the voice of those who, at this moment, cannot or dare not speak—for all those who suffer and perish, or live with the consequences of our collective actions or inactions.

I am pleased, esteemed colleagues, that we are discussing this topic today. But beyond all the concrete mechanisms that the IPU, as well as other interparliamentary organisations and forums, can initiate and implement institutionally, I believe the most important action is that which we, as representatives of our respective national parliaments, can ensure ourselves—to serve as a reminder that it is respect for human

dignity that is the foundation of every civilised state and of a responsible international order.

Therefore, when we ask how to preserve and ensure the applicability of the principles of humanitarian law in times of crisis, the answer is simple: cooperation, dialogue, and consistency! The cooperation of all of us, sufficiently diverse yet united around a goal that transcends us; dialogue, as the only mechanism to be employed when addressing any individual crisis, wherever it occurs; and, finally, consistency in upholding the principles of public international law.

A global world brings global responsibilities. The first of these is to understand, in solidarity and unity, that the suffering or hardship of each individual is also the pain and concern of all of us, and that part of the solution lies in our hands!