



PRESENTATION

BY

**HON. ADVOCATE J.F.N MUDENDA
(ZIMBABWEAN SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT)**

**AT THE 151TH ASSEMBLY OF THE IPU AND
RELATED MEETINGS: 18th to 23rd OCTOBER
2025.**

ON

**“UPHOLDING HUMANITARIAN NORMS AND
SUPPORTING HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN
TIMES OF CRISIS”**

AT

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND

Mr. President;

The 151st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Related Meetings convenes on the backdrop of escalating geopolitical tensions which have inadvertently led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis characterised by food insecurity, displacements and catastrophic loss of life. In this context, I wish to applaud the IPU for the apt theme: ***“Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis”*** which strongly resonates with the urgent call for effective multilateralism. At a time when the principles of distinction, proportionality and humanity are being violated with alarming acrimony and unashamed impunity, Parliaments must indeed respond with courage, conviction and concrete action to uphold fearlessly humanitarian norms through concerted Parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue to avert inhumane treatment of victims of war conflicts. We should do so because humanitarian norms are the fundamental ethos and principles that safeguard human dignity during armed conflicts and disasters. These norms are rooted in the

Geneva Conventions, customary international law and human rights instruments. They demand the protection of civilians by ensuring impartial humanitarian access to victims of conflict and prohibiting attacks on medical facilities as well as killing aid workers. Victims of war conflicts need to be always treated humanely¹. That is the high moral ground from where IPU Parliaments must act decisively to save the 350 million victims of war globally.

Mr. President;

The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (Kampala Convention) represents progressive leadership in humanitarian protection² continentally provided such norms are backed by the imperative of political will and compelling parliamentary action.

Within the SADC region, the Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan emphasise disaster preparedness, mutual assistance and

¹ International Committee of the Red Cross. Geneva Conventions and their Commentaries. <https://www.icrc.org/en/law-and-policy/geneva-conventions-and-their-commentaries> ↵

² African Union. (2009). African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). <https://au.int/en/treaties/african-union-convention-protection-and-assistance-internally-displaced-persons-africa> ↵

coordinated humanitarian responses in the face of adversity³.

Mr. President;

We cannot discuss humanitarian norms and action without addressing the Middle East conflict. While we appreciate recent developments towards peace, including the ceasefire agreement, the humanitarian situation remains catastrophically dire. What makes this crisis particularly troubling is the **inconsistent and selective application of humanitarian norms**. Further, International humanitarian law has been flagrantly violated while the international response has been paralysed by geopolitical and economic considerations. Even the United Nations finds itself helpless with its resolutions ignored and its agencies attacked shamelessly. Some nations, bound by the very Conventions they helped to author, are complicit through their silence and inactivity. Equally, the conflict in Eastern Europe should cease in response to the dictates of humanitarian norms. It is hoped that President Trump's

³ Southern African Development Community (SADC). Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation. https://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/show/Protocol_on_Politics_Defence_and_Security20001.pdf ↵

peace initiatives in Eastern Europe will prevail to stop the war there. Furthermore, let there be utmost respect for humanitarian norms in Africa's hot spots, especially in the DRC where more than 6 million people have lost their lives in the past ten years and thousands have been displaced internally and externally! What more of the 30 million victims of famine and displacement in Sudan and now the insecurity in Madagascar where there is a clarion call for peace and security in respect of humanitarian norms. The IPU must stand up towards determined action. The United Nations must not be found wanting in championing the application of humanitarian norms in all conflict zones globally. Men and women of goodwill should stand up and be counted in defense of humanitarian norms in the spirit of the Roman Catholic Church's Jubilee of Hope as we embrace multilateralism and solidarity with the victims of callous war conflicts.

I So Submit.