



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

153rd IPU Assembly

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Speech by Dr. Tulia Ackson IPU President

Inaugural Ceremony of the 153rd IPU Assembly

Arusha, 5 October 2026

Right Honourable Dr. Lameck Mwigulu Nchemba, Prime Minister of the United Republic of Tanzania, representing Her Excellency Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Honourable Mr. Mussa Azzan Zungu, Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, Ms. Susan Ngogi Namondo, UN Resident Coordinator in Tanzania, Ms. Anda Filip, distinguished Secretary General of the IPU, Honourable Speakers, Deputy Speakers of Parliament, Members of Parliament, Ladies and gentlemen, Dear friends,

Mti mmoja haujengi msitu.

There is an old Swahili proverb that says “One tree does not make a forest.” A single tree may grow tall and strong and may live for many generations. But however mighty it becomes, one tree alone can never make a forest. For that, it needs others. It needs *community*.

And today, that word, community, has a very special meaning for me. Because today I have the immense joy of saying to all of you: Welcome to Tanzania. Welcome to my home. Welcome to *my community*!

Before I go any further, I want to thank my country’s leadership and authorities for opening our doors to the IPU – Madam President, Mr. Speaker, we are most grateful.

Over the past three years, I have delivered many speeches at IPU events across the world. But I must confess, this one feels different.

Today, I stand before you as President of the IPU and as a proud Tanzanian. As a daughter of this land. And as someone who believes deeply in the lesson of that old Swahili proverb: None of us stands alone. None of us succeeds alone. None of us builds anything lasting alone.

Three years ago, on African soil, I was entrusted with the extraordinary honour of becoming the first African woman to serve as IPU President. Today, here in Africa, that journey is approaching its end.

This will be my last inaugural address to an IPU Assembly. And I can tell you, from the bottom of my heart: it has been the honour of a lifetime.

I have watched the IPU come together across languages, cultures, religions and political traditions. We have also disagreed. But we have kept talking, kept showing up and, more importantly, kept listening.

If I have made my own small contribution to this Organization – an institution that existed long before my presidency and will continue its work long after it – I hope it has been this: to bring people a little closer together. To build a few more bridges.

Because, as I said, *mti mmoja haujengi msitu*. One tree does not make a forest. And one president does not make the IPU. **We all do. Together.**

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Dear colleagues,

That brings me back to that word, *community*, which lies at the heart of this 153rd IPU Assembly.

We are here as the **global parliamentary community**. And as such, we know how much we need each other. No country can stop climate change alone. No nation can secure lasting peace alone. No State can build a fairer international order by itself.

Our strength comes from our ability to work together. It comes from the same conviction that has brought the world's parliaments together since 1889: dialogue and cooperation are always worth pursuing to address shared global problems.

And we really need dialogue and cooperation now, right now. Wars are destroying lives and communities around the world. Respect for international law and human rights is under severe strain. The climate crisis pays no attention to borders. Artificial intelligence and other new technologies are advancing faster than many of the rules designed to govern them.

None of these challenges will wait patiently. And none can be resolved unilaterally. We must cooperate precisely when the temptation is to retreat behind our borders. This is the hard work of multilateralism – and it has rarely been more necessary.

Yet, however global these challenges may be, people and communities ultimately live with their consequences. And for us, as parliamentarians, that is where the *global* becomes *local* and even *personal*.

Because we are also here as representatives of our **own communities**. Those who elected us and placed their trust in us. And, just as importantly, those who did not vote for us and those who may have lost faith in politics altogether.

Dear friends,

Something serious is happening in our societies around the world. The very idea of *community* is increasingly being challenged by a culture of self-interest and extreme individualism. The belief that *my* success matters more than *our* well-being is one of the greatest ills of our time.

The most recent *World Inequality Report 2026* gives us a striking way to picture what is happening.

Imagine a football stadium. Fill every one of its 50,000 seats with the wealthiest and most powerful people on Earth – about 0.001% of the world's population.

Now, look outside that stadium. There is the poorest half of the global adult population: 2.8 billion people.

Those inside the stadium own **three times** as much wealth as half of the world's adults, who live on less than 10% of the global income.

It is a staggering image. And, of course, it speaks to something larger than material wealth. It speaks to the experience of being *inside* versus being left *outside*.

Inside the networks that open doors and create opportunities. *Inside* the places where decisions are made. *Inside* a system of institutions that see you, hear you and respond to your needs.

Or *outside*, locked out, looking in.

That exclusion is deeply corrosive. When people see that the system is stacked against them, that institutions work better for others than they do for them, something fundamental begins to break: trust.

And when trust breaks, the distance between citizens and those who govern them grows wider and wider.

Good governance may sound like a rather technical expression. But in reality, it is something deeply human. It means closing that distance. Good governance is about breaking down the barriers between those on the inside and those looking in, so that everyone has a stake, a voice and a fair chance to participate.

Of course, we cannot promise everyone the same outcome. But we can work to ensure that opportunity is not reserved for a lucky few.

That takes institutions that are accountable, transparent, and that deliver for the people: good schools; quality health care; access to justice and strong social protections; decent housing, safety, and the basic conditions for a life of dignity.

It also takes institutions that listen and act. When people have a real say in public decisions, policies are better and governments more responsive.

And we need every voice in the room, especially those too often excluded: women, young people, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups. Their participation is not a box to be ticked. They bring experience that changes the conversation and, sometimes, changes the decision itself. And this is what meaningful inclusivity should achieve.

Which brings me to parliamentary democracy.

As parliamentarians, we stand between citizens and the State. We can bring the voices of our constituencies into the decisions that shape national priorities. Through legislation, budgets and oversight, we can ask a simple question: are public resources reaching the people who need them?

Good intentions are not enough. The true test of any policy is what happens when it leaves the page and enters people's lives.

Honourable delegates,

I began by telling you that this speech felt different. Perhaps that is also because a final inaugural address inevitably makes one look backwards. But, somehow, I find myself looking forward too.

I look at the parliamentarians gathered in this room – my colleagues from every corner of the world. And I am reminded that politics can still have an extraordinary capacity to improve people's lives when practiced with courage, humility, and a sense of common purpose.

And I look forward because, despite everything happening in our world, I still deeply believe in public service and in what it can achieve.

That is why we have come to Arusha.

Over the coming days, I hope we will be bold enough to question, generous enough to listen, and practical enough to turn what we learn here into something useful when we go back home.

And so I return to the Swahili wisdom with which I began: *Mti mmoja haujengi msitu*.

"One tree does not make a forest." Our societies are stronger when everyone has a place in them, when trust binds us together, and when opportunity is open to all.

I wish you a productive and inspiring 153rd IPU Assembly.

Thank you.