

Madam President,

Dear colleagues,

It is a privilege to address this Assembly in Arusha as head of the Belgian delegation.

Good governance begins with a simple promise: public institutions must serve the people who depend on them. Citizens should know who makes a decision, why it was made, and whom they can hold accountable if it does not work.

That promise is especially important in a country such as Belgium, where responsibilities are shared between different levels of government. Our experience shows the value of bringing decisions close to the people affected by them. It also shows why responsibilities must be clear. When everyone appears to be responsible, citizens can struggle to find anyone who is accountable.

Decisions should be taken at the level best placed to act, with the resources and responsibility needed to deliver results. Local communities must have room to respond to their own circumstances. Cooperation between different levels of government remains essential when challenges cross borders or responsibilities.

Good governance also requires respect for public money. Every budget expresses a choice about people's priorities. Parliamentarians must therefore do more than approve spending. We must examine whether it achieves its purpose, whether services reach those who need them, and whether programmes should be improved when they fall short.

But good governance is not only about managing public institutions well. It is also about creating the conditions in which people can move forward. Access to education and knowledge helps people develop their talents. Innovation allows them to find new solutions to shared challenges. Trade connects communities to new opportunities and gives entrepreneurs the chance to grow, create jobs and contribute to prosperity.

Empowering communities also means empowering individuals to believe in their own abilities and contribute to society. Too many people face barriers that are not immediately visible: limited opportunities, pressure from their family or

surroundings, or systems that make it difficult to become independent. These barriers can be particularly significant for women and girls whose choices about education, work or their own future are constrained by the expectations of others. Good governance should help people overcome those barriers. It should offer support when they need it, while opening a credible path towards education, work and greater independence.

And it should leave room for those who want to start a business or turn an idea into something valuable for their community. Our aim should be a society in which people are encouraged to develop their talents, make their own choices and take part in shaping their future.

Dear colleagues,

Trust grows when institutions are honest about what they can deliver, clear about who is responsible, and willing to learn from results. As parliamentarians, we can help build that trust through rigorous oversight, open debate and close contact with the communities we represent.

Let us work for institutions that use public resources wisely, give people the confidence to take initiative and create opportunities for all.

Thank you.