
153rd IPU Assembly
Arusha - Tanzania, 5 – 9 October 2026

GENERAL DEBATE

**Enhancing Good Governance and Empowering Communities through Inclusivity, Trust
and Opportunities for All**

by Mr. Demetris Demetriou, MP (Cyprus)

Madam President of the IPU,

Dear Colleagues,

It is a privilege to participate in my first IPU Assembly here in Arusha as Head of the Cyprus delegation and to contribute to a debate that goes to the heart of democratic governance and to the relationship between citizens and the institutions that serve them.

As a small island nation at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, Cyprus has long understood that governance is not an abstract ideal. It is the daily contract between citizens and the state, built through transparent institutions, the rule of law and accountable leadership. When institutions deliver, justice is accessible and public services reach every community fairly and effectively and thus trust follows.

Today, however, trust cannot be taken for granted. Citizens expect transparency, accountability and results. They want institutions that listen but also institutions that deliver. As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to ensure that public policies are based on evidence, respond to real needs and make the best use of public resources.

Strong institutions alone, however, are not enough. Good governance also requires empowered communities. Citizens must be active participants in public life, not merely recipients of decisions taken on their behalf. This means creating meaningful opportunities for engagement and ensuring that citizens can genuinely contribute to the decisions that affect their lives, particularly for young people, women and those whose voices are too often underrepresented.

In Cyprus, we have learned that strong communities are the foundation of social cohesion. Whether in our cities, our rural villages or our remote mountainous regions, people need the same things: quality public services, economic opportunity and confidence that their concerns are being heard. Empowering communities therefore means bringing decision-making closer

to citizens and ensuring that development benefits all regions of a country, not only its major urban centers.

New technologies offer important opportunities to strengthen governance and empower communities. They can improve access to public services, enhance transparency, support evidence-based decision-making and create new channels, through which citizens can engage with public institutions. In Cyprus, through the work of the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy, significant efforts have been made to advance the digital transformation of the government and bring public services closer to citizens and businesses. For smaller countries in particular, digital innovation can help bridge geographic barriers and ensure that no community is left behind. However, technological progress must be accompanied by appropriate safeguards to protect privacy, fundamental rights and the integrity of democratic processes.

The experience of Cyprus also reflects on why respect for the rule of law remains central to good governance. More than fifty years after the Turkish invasion in 1974, over one third of our territory remains under Turkish military occupation. More than 200,000 Cypriots were forcibly displaced, became refugees in their own country and continue to be denied their fundamental rights, while hundreds remain missing. The continued occupation of part of an EU Member State by a foreign military force is a violation of international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. The denial of fundamental rights, including the right of return of displaced persons, must concern all those committed to justice, accountability and the consistent application of the rule of law. Growing trust in institutions, whether national or international, can only be achieved when principles are upheld without exception.

Dear Colleagues,

As parliamentarians, our mandated duty is towards the citizens we represent; therefore, their request to bridge the gap of accountability between them and the institutions becomes vital, as transparent, effective and responsive governance comes from the solid foundations of trust, opportunity and inclusivity for all.

Thank you.