

**Address to the IPU General Assembly
*Arusha, Tanzania***

**Madam President,
Distinguished colleagues,**

I extend my warm thanks to the Parliament and people of Tanzania for hosting us here in Arusha.

Our debate concerns the relationship between citizens and the institutions that represent them. That relationship rests on trust. And trust is earned when people see that their voices matter, that opportunities are open to them, and that those who hold public office are answerable for their decisions.

Parliaments have a duty to lead by example. We must make our proceedings open, scrutinize public spending and ensure that allegations of corruption are investigated without favour. Accountability strengthens democracy because it reminds citizens that power is exercised on their behalf.

Yet good governance is more than sound institutions. It must reach the communities whose lives our decisions affect. When we prepare laws and development plans, we should listen to local authorities, civil society and citizens themselves. Women, young people and persons with disabilities must be able to shape those decisions from the outset. People are more likely to trust a policy when they have helped to build it.

Listening must be matched by evidence. Research, reliable data and public consultation can tell us whether a policy is meeting a real need. Evaluation can tell us whether it has delivered. We must look closely at those whose experiences are often hidden in national statistics and be ready to change course when the results fall short.

Technology can help us do this work better. It can make parliamentary information easier to access, bring more people into public debate and improve services. But its benefits must be shared. We must protect privacy and human rights, confront false information, and ensure that people without digital access are not excluded.

Distinguished colleagues,

We meet at a time when democracy is under pressure from the rise of populism. Its appeal often grows where people feel unheard or left behind. Our response must be to address those concerns seriously, while defending the institutions and freedoms that protect every citizen.

Parliaments are guardians of democratic values. Whatever our political differences, we must stand together for the rule of law, open debate and respect for one another. Unity in that purpose does not require us to agree on every policy. It requires us to safeguard the right to disagree.

Let us return from Arusha committed to parliaments that listen more closely, act more transparently and open the path to opportunity for all. That is how we strengthen our communities. That is how we renew trust in democracy.

Thank you.