

153rd ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU)

GENERAL DEBATE

Theme: “Enhancing Good Governance and Empowering Communities through Inclusivity, Trust and Opportunities for All”

Speech for:

H.E. Tan Sri Dato’ Dr. Johari Abdul

Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malaysia

5–9 October 2026, Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania

Madam Tulia Ackson,

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Madam Anda Philip

Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Mussa Azzan Zungu

Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania

Excellencies, Honourable Speakers and Presidents of Parliament,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Allow me first to thank the Inter-Parliamentary Union and our gracious hosts in Tanzania for bringing us together in Arusha to discuss a subject that goes to the heart of our responsibility as parliamentarians: good governance and the empowerment of our communities.
2. Good governance is a good and noble concept. It represents our aspiration for institutions that are accountable, societies that are inclusive, leadership that is responsible, and opportunities that are available to all.

3. But for this noble concept to succeed, it must first be understood by society and appreciated by society. It cannot remain a concept understood only by governments, parliamentarians, academics or international organisations. It must become part of the values and consciousness of the people themselves.
4. Governments have a responsibility to introduce and promote the principles of good governance. The Executive must translate these principles into policies and implementation. Parliament must provide legislation, representation and oversight. But if we want good governance to endure, we must also institutionalise it within society.
5. And I believe one of the most important places to begin is with our young people.
6. We often say that the young are our future leaders. But leadership does not begin on the day someone becomes a Member of Parliament, a Minister, a public servant or the head of an institution. The foundations of responsible leadership must be built much earlier.
7. Integrity, accountability, inclusivity, fairness, respect for institutions and responsibility towards others must be taught, explained and reinforced. Young people must understand not only their rights, but also their responsibilities to society.
8. This is why I believe that good governance should be institutionalised through our education systems and incorporated into appropriate curricula and programmes. If we want young people eventually to affirm and practise good governance as leaders, we must give them the opportunity to understand and experience its principles today.
9. But education cannot be confined to the classroom. Young people must also be engaged. They should be given opportunities to participate, debate, listen to different perspectives, understand institutions and experience how democratic decisions are made.

10. At the Parliament of Malaysia, this is something we have begun putting into practice.
11. Through our Parliamentary School programme, school students between the ages of 16 and 18 come to Parliament to learn about our legislative system, parliamentary democracy and the principles of good governance.
12. We want them to see Parliament not simply as a building or an institution belonging to politicians, but as an institution that belongs to the people. They learn how laws are made, how Members of Parliament represent their constituents, how government is held accountable and why public trust matters.
13. At another level, our Youth Parliament gives young people, including those from our universities, an opportunity to experience the responsibilities of parliamentarians and future leaders. They learn to debate issues, formulate arguments, listen to opposing views and appreciate that leadership carries both authority and responsibility.
14. We also conduct youth programmes built around the same principles. In doing so, Parliament works with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, because preparing responsible future leaders cannot be the responsibility of one institution alone.
15. It requires a whole-of-society approach. Families, schools, universities, communities, civil society, governments and Parliaments all have a role. And those of us who are Members of Parliament and leaders have an even greater responsibility because young people learn not only from what we teach them, but also from the example we set.

16. This same commitment to good governance must also be reflected in the institutions we lead.
17. Malaysia has spent the past two years reforming its Parliament, and I wish to speak candidly about what we have achieved and, with equal frankness, where our work must continue.
18. For thirty-three years, our House functioned in practice as an extension of the Executive. In 2025, Parliament passed the Parliamentary Services Act, restoring greater institutional autonomy to Parliament over its own staffing, finances and training through a Parliamentary Service Council answerable to Parliament itself.
19. We have also established ten Special Select Committees, each comprising twelve backbenchers, empowered to summon witnesses and examine expenditure within their respective mandates.
20. These are important reforms because good governance requires strong institutions. Their strength must not depend simply on the individuals occupying positions of authority. They must have the structures, capacity and independence to perform their responsibilities consistently.

Honourable Delegates,

21. Malaysia's score on the Corruption Perceptions Index rose three places this year to 54th among 182 countries, our best standing in over a decade. This is an encouraging achievement and one that reflects sustained efforts to strengthen integrity and accountability.
22. Since 2024, our Anti-Corruption Commission has opened more than 2,600 investigations, filed more than 1,000 charges and secured over 560 convictions. More than half involved high-profile cases. This demonstrates that enforcement remains an important part of our governance framework.

23. Yet good governance is broader than legislation, enforcement or rankings. Public confidence ultimately rests on whether people experience institutions as fair, effective and accountable.
24. This is why institutional performance and public perception must continue to reinforce one another. Where progress has been achieved, it must be communicated and understood. Where public concerns remain, institutions must listen and continue to improve.
25. Good governance also requires inclusivity. Representation determines who participates in decisions, whose experiences are heard and whether communities can see themselves reflected in the institutions that serve them.
26. Worldwide, fewer than three in every ten parliamentarians are women. In our own House, the figure is lower still. Young people and other segments of society also remain underrepresented in many legislatures around the world.
27. For me, this is not simply a matter of numbers. A Parliament becomes stronger when it draws upon a wider range of experiences, perspectives and talents. Inclusivity strengthens representation, and stronger representation strengthens public trust.
28. The same applies to empowering communities. Citizens should not merely be the recipients of decisions made on their behalf. They should understand their institutions and have meaningful opportunities to participate in the democratic process.
29. This is precisely why educating and engaging young people is so important. When young people understand Parliament, democracy and good governance, we are not merely preparing them to become politicians. We are preparing them to become responsible citizens and responsible leaders in whatever field they choose.

30. And this effort must be continuous. A single programme is not enough. A single reform is not enough. A single generation of good leaders is not enough.
31. Good governance requires continuous education, continuous engagement, continuous institutional strengthening and, most importantly, continuous implementation.
32. This is why institutionalisation matters. When the principles of good governance are embedded within our education systems, our public institutions and our democratic culture, they are no longer dependent on one programme, one government or one group of leaders. They can be carried forward from one generation to another.
33. The young people sitting in our classrooms today will one day occupy positions of responsibility in our countries. Some will sit in Parliament. Some will serve in government. Others will lead businesses, universities, civil society organisations and their communities.
34. Our responsibility is to ensure that when that day comes, integrity, accountability, inclusivity and public responsibility are not new concepts to them. They should already understand these principles, appreciate their importance and be prepared to practise them.
35. No Parliament can achieve this in isolation. The spirit of common endeavour that Malaysia offers this Assembly is therefore not a declaration of success, but a commitment to continuous progress.
36. We come to Arusha mindful that our legislation must continue to advance, our institutions must continue to strengthen, our communities must continue to be empowered, and our young people must be prepared to carry this work forward.

37. Because good governance is not a destination that any country reaches once and for all. It is a continuous process and a responsibility that must be renewed with every generation.
38. If we teach it, explain it, institutionalise it and, above all, practise it consistently, then the young people whom we call the leaders of tomorrow will be ready to uphold it when their time comes to lead.
39. That is how a noble concept becomes a living culture. That is how trust is built. That is how communities are empowered. And that is how we create meaningful opportunities for all.

Thank you.