

153rd Assembly, General Debate

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

Speech by Mr Speaker Carmelo Abela

Dear President of the Assembly, IPU President, IPU Secretary General
Fellow Speakers and Parliamentarians

Good governance is ultimately about people. It is about ensuring that institutions serve citizens effectively, that decisions are taken responsibly and transparently, and that every individual feels that his or her voice matters. Strong institutions are essential, but institutions are at their strongest when they enjoy the confidence of the communities they serve.

As parliamentarians, we have a particular responsibility in this regard. Parliaments are not only places where laws are enacted. They are institutions through which citizens should be heard, different perspectives represented, governments held to account, and dialogue transformed into action. Good governance therefore requires openness, accountability and, above all, trust.

Yet trust cannot simply be expected. It must be earned and continuously renewed. Citizens must be able to see that institutions listen to their concerns, respond to their needs and act in the public interest. Meaningful consultation and dialogue with citizens, civil society, social partners and local communities are therefore fundamental to democratic governance.

In Malta, we recognise the importance of placing people and communities at the centre of our long-term development. Malta's Sustainable

Development Strategy for 2050 emphasises the empowerment of individuals and communities and identifies inclusivity and equality as essential to sustainable development. It also recognises civil society and voluntary organisations as important contributors to community resilience and social inclusion.

Inclusivity must, however, mean more than ensuring representation. It means creating genuine opportunities for participation. It means ensuring that young people, older persons, persons with disabilities and those who may find themselves at the margins of society are able to contribute to the decisions that affect their lives.

Recent developments in Malta reflect this approach. In July of this year, the Maltese Parliament unanimously approved legislation to include disability as a protected characteristic in the constitutional provisions concerning fundamental rights and freedoms. This is one example of how parliamentary action can contribute towards strengthening inclusion and ensuring that institutions respond to the needs and rights of all members of society.

Empowering communities also requires us to create opportunities. Education, decent employment, digital access, participation in public life and strong local communities all enable individuals to realise their potential. Our task as policymakers is not simply to provide assistance, but to help create the conditions in which people can participate, contribute and prosper.

This is particularly important for our younger generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Inclusivity, trust and opportunity are not separate ambitions. They reinforce one another. Inclusive institutions encourage participation. Participation

strengthens trust. Trust enables cooperation. And cooperation allows us to create opportunities that reach beyond individuals and strengthen entire communities.

At a time when our societies face rapid technological, economic, environmental and social change, maintaining this relationship between citizens and institutions becomes even more important. Our response must be to bring people closer to democratic institutions, rather than allowing distance and mistrust to grow.

As Speaker of the House of Representatives of Malta, I firmly believe in the value of dialogue and parliamentary cooperation in achieving this objective. Across different countries and political traditions, we may face different circumstances, but we share a common responsibility: to ensure that governance remains centred on human dignity, participation and the wellbeing of our citizens.

Good governance should not be measured only by the efficiency of our institutions, but also by their ability to improve people's lives, strengthen communities and ensure that no one is excluded from the opportunities our societies create.

By building inclusive institutions, nurturing trust and providing meaningful opportunities for all, we can empower our communities and strengthen the democratic foundations upon which our societies depend.

Thank you