

Address to the General Debate at the 153rd IPU Assembly – Tanzania
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Mrs. President,

It is a great honour to address this Assembly on behalf of the delegation of the Netherlands. The theme of this Assembly, *“Enhancing good governance and empowering communities through inclusivity, trust and opportunities for all,”* strongly resonates with our delegation. Good governance, inclusiveness and equal opportunities are inseparably linked.

As Willem Drees, the first Dutch Prime Minister after the Second World War, once said: *“Democracy is not a form of government for people who seek the easy way.”* Democracy requires responsibility, accountability and the active engagement of both citizens and elected representatives. Effective governance depends on strong democratic institutions, an independent judiciary and parliaments that are able to hold governments to account. Good governance is not only about institutions. It also requires legislation that protects the vulnerable, promotes social justice and considers the interests of future generations. The strength of a democracy is ultimately measured by how it treats those whose voices are least heard.

A free and independent press is equally essential. Journalists inform citizens, expose wrongdoing and help safeguard public trust. Without reliable information, democracies become more vulnerable to disinformation and polarization.

Inclusiveness is another pillar of strong societies. Communities thrive when everyone can participate and develop their talents, and when the dignity and worth of every person are respected.

At the same time, democratic societies face new challenges. Artificial intelligence offers enormous opportunities, but also significant risks. Power can become concentrated in the hands of a few actors who are not democratically accountable, while algorithms may reinforce existing biases rather than strengthen diversity and inclusion.

As parliamentarians, we have a responsibility to ensure that technological development remains subject to democratic oversight. We must protect fundamental rights, promote transparency and ensure that technology serves humanity, not the other way around.

In this regard, I am reminded of the words of Pope Leo XIV, who emphasized that technological innovation must always be guided by ethical responsibility and respect for the human person. Artificial intelligence can be a powerful tool, but it must never replace human judgment or democratic accountability.

Our task is therefore clear: to strengthen good governance, protect independent journalism, promote inclusive societies and ensure democratic oversight of emerging technologies. The Dutch delegation welcomes the attention that the 153rd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union gives to these themes. By working together, we can ensure that innovation strengthens democracy, that power is exercised responsibly and that progress contributes to the common good.

Thank you.