

**Speech by Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, Speaker of the UK
House of Commons**

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

**General debate: Enhancing good governance and
empowering communities through inclusivity, trust and
opportunities for all**

Mr Speaker,

Fellow parliamentarians,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here in Arusha for the 153rd IPU
Assembly.

I would like to begin with a simple suggestion: good
governance depends upon public confidence.

People need to have confidence that our democratic institutions act in the public interest. They expect parliaments to listen and act on what is most important to them. They expect politics to be accessible and understandable rather than remote, and for institutions to be accountable and transparent.

What I would say is that in recent years, those expectations have become harder to meet.

The information environment has changed dramatically. While social media can bring people closer to their elected representatives, it can also increase misinformation, polarisation and distrust. And confidence in our democratic institutions continues to be weakened by the perception that decisions are made far away, by people who do not understand the lives of those they represent.

Therefore, we must be open and explain how decisions are made, create genuine opportunities for people to participate, and show that when people engage, we listen.

I want to talk about the unique role of Parliaments here, and the ways the House of Commons seeks to achieve this.

Firstly, **effective parliamentary scrutiny is an essential component of good governance.**

The House of Commons provides many mechanisms through which the UK government is held to account.

Ministers must come to the despatch box every day the House is sitting to answer oral and, very often if I have my way(!), urgent questions. MPs can table written questions on all aspects of government policy.

The Government's ministerial code is clear that important policy announcements must be made to the House of Commons first through ministerial statements. And MPs debate and scrutinise government policy and legislation daily.

Importantly, all of this takes place on the record where the public can see how decisions are explained and challenged.

But scrutiny is not limited to the House of Commons Chamber. Much of the most forensic scrutiny of government policy and spending is undertaken by the House's departmental select committees which have been in existence since 1979.

They take evidence from ministers and civil servants as well as from experts, academics, industry and people with direct experience of the issue being examined. They listen before reaching conclusions.

And committees also travel. They hold evidence sessions away from the Palace of Westminster, engaging with the public where the consequences of government policy are felt.

That is important because democracy can't be sustained entirely from our capitals. Parliaments must create mechanisms through which the experience of people across all communities can influence decision-making. And effective scrutiny helps to bridge the gap between policy and people's lived experience.

This brings me to my second point, that **an inclusive Parliament must be accessible.**

A democratic institution cannot reasonably ask people to participate if they encounter unnecessary barriers when they do so.

We have been working to improve accessibility across the Parliamentary Estate, in our procedures and in the way parliamentary information is communicated and presented.

This is not a finished task, however. The House's Modernisation Committee recently called for accessibility to become embedded in all aspects of the House's work and culture. This is a priority recognised by the House Administration, including in relation to the future of the Palace of Westminster.

However, it is not only about physical accessibility, but also about providing accessible opportunities for the public to engage. One successful example is the e-petitions system which, since 2015, has given people a direct way to raise issues

with Government and Parliament, and to ensure that those issues receive a meaningful response.

An e-petition can be the beginning of a much wider campaign and raise the profile of issues that might not otherwise reach Parliament, often leading to policy change.

For example, a recent petition calling for the appointment of a maternity commissioner attracted more than 167,000 signatures. It was debated in Westminster Hall, and in June the Government announced that England would appoint its first ever maternity and neonatal commissioner.

The third point I wanted to make is that if we want lasting confidence in democratic institutions, we must **engage young people early**.

The House of Commons has made education and engagement with children and young people a central part of its work.

Our Education and Engagement Team runs a range of programmes designed not simply to tell young people what Parliament is, but to show them how they can participate in democracy.

One of our biggest programmes is UK Parliament Week, an annual public engagement event.

In November 2025, we had our most successful UK Parliament Week on record, with 2.8 million children and young people participating across every parliamentary constituency.

The programme has more than doubled its reach over the past three years. Today, one in every three schools takes part.

And Visiting the Palace of Westminster is the number one request we get from schools. We now have our largest on-site programme on record, with up to 24 schools visiting every day, and more than 85,000 children and young people participating in tours and educational workshops at our Education Centre.

This shows us that there is an enormous appetite among young people to understand and have confidence in democracy if we give them meaningful opportunities to do so.

Finally, I wanted to consider the issue of **technology and democratic participation**.

Digital technology, including Artificial Intelligence, gives parliaments extraordinary opportunities.

Today, parliamentary debates, committee evidence, reports, questions and other information can reach audiences far beyond what may have been considered possible only a few years ago.

Technology can make Parliament more transparent and allow people to follow parliamentary proceedings and engage with their representatives more easily.

But technology, and in particular AI, also present significant challenges not least when it comes to the misinformation and

polarisation which I mentioned earlier. There is an important balance to strike, and an open Parliament must not become a vulnerable Parliament.

Foreign interference, coordinated disinformation and attempts to exploit legitimate participation can threaten the trust that openness is intended to build.

But, of course, our response to this cannot be to close the doors.

Instead, we must maintain clear and transparent rules about who can participate and how.

We must constantly seek to strengthen our ability to identify activity aimed at undermining our democracies, protecting parliamentary systems and data, and ensuring that Members and parliamentary staff have the skills and support they need to recognise and respond to attempts at manipulation.

Our parliaments must remain open to the people we represent, while being vigilant to those who would exploit that openness to weaken the democratic system.

Colleagues, **in conclusion**, I would like to say that while across our different parliaments our institutions and traditions will, of course, look different, there is something fundamental that we all share: the relationship between our democratic institutions and the people they serve.

That relationship rests on trust and public confidence which is strengthened when our parliaments are open and inclusive places which are accountable and understood by all.

Thank you.