153st IPU Assembly - General Debate

"***Enhancing good governance and empowering communities through inclusivity, trust and opportunities for all***"

Statement by the Head of the Austrian Delegation

Arusha, Tansania

Honourable President,

Honourable Speakers,

Dear Colleagues,

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our hosts for their warm hospitality and for organising this Assembly so well. Tansania is a great country.

Good governance begins with a simple principle: **institutions exist to serve people.**

Citizens should be able to **trust** that their voices are **heard**, that public resources are managed **responsibly**, and that laws are **applied fairly.**

But trust cannot be taken for granted. It has to be earned — through **transparency, accountability, participation and results.**

We Parliamentarians have a particular **responsibility**. We are not only legislators; **we are representatives of our communities**. We have a **duty** to bring people's **voices into political processes**.

Inclusivity means participation.

It begins with **education, safety, healthcare, functioning public services and opportunities** for the next generation.

Strong communities and a **resilient economy** are the **foundations** on which **trust** and **participation** can grow.

We have heard many speeches during this general debate, and I do not wish to repeat, what you have already heard from my predecessors. **We all know** what is needed to enhance good governance and empower communities.

So I would like to focus on one word: **opportunity**.

Because opportunity is about **the future** — and the future is **changing**.

Digitalisation is transforming our societies. Artificial intelligence is becoming a **cornerstone of our economy, our society, our democracy —** and even **our security.**

AI is all around us: in education, healthcare, public administration, the workplace, politics, the military, the way we access information, and the way we communicate.

This brings enormous opportunities. **But it also brings great risks.**

Our responsibility is to make sure **that technology expands opportunity** — not creating **new forms of exclusion.**

The question is not whether we embrace technological change. **It is how we make sure that everyone can participate in it, benefit from it, and trust it.**

We have a responsibility not only to ensure that **the information provided by artificial intelligence can be trusted**, but also to ensure that **AI remains a tool in service of humanity — and not vice versa.**

Innovation is created by people.

A **strong economy** needs both **technological progress** and **opportunities for people to contribute to it.**

As our societies become increasingly **digital**, we must protect something equally important: **the right to an analogue life**.

Freedom of choice is an essential part of **individual freedom.**

Digitalisation should **expand** our choices, **not eliminate them**.

Artificial intelligence can help us process tremendous amounts of information, but **democratic responsibility cannot be outsourced to an algorithm.**

We therefore **need transparency, accountability, human oversight, protection of fundamental rights, data protection** and the right to challenge **consequential decisions.**

Ultimately, **good governance** is defined by **the quality of life** we, as Parliamentarians, help **create** for the people we **represent**.

It is about whether people can **trust their institutions, have access to free, independent and diverse media, participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives, rely on quality education, healthcare and safety, and have a real voice in shaping the future** of their communities.

Austria strongly believes, that **the future of governance** must be **digital and human, innovative and responsible, connected and inclusive.**

Let us empower **people** as partners in **shaping policy.**

Let us use **technology to support people,** not make them disposable**.**

Let us protect **free and independent media.**

And let us preserve the **right to an analogue life** — the **freedom to choose** when technology serves us, and when human interaction remains essential.

Opportunity and progress should never come at the **expense of our freedom, our dignity or our humanity.**

Thank you.