



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speakers' dialogue

Low trust in democracy: An urgent call to rethink our governance models

*Monday, 8 April 2019, 2.30 – 4.00 p.m.
Salwa 1, Sheraton Convention Center*

Concept note

A recent study¹ based on nationally representative interviews with over 125,000 respondents in 50 countries worldwide shed light on a worrying trend: trust in governments and governance structures is increasingly challenged and weakened. Overall, results show that citizens feel that their governments are not acting in their interest and that their voices matter little in politics. This perception remains strong, whatever the political system in place and whatever the level of democracy.

Studies like these are indicative of an alarmingly growing trend of disenchantment with democracy and the governance structures, including parliaments, in place. These conclusions can also be seen to apply to regional and global models of governance, which today seem dangerously threatened due to a general perception of being distant from citizens, obscure in their functioning and accountability, and questionable in terms of their efficiency.

This growing disenchantment undermines democratic national and global institutions that then become prey to nationalist discourses that long for their disappearance.

In this scenario, the need for global, national and local governments to make a thorough self-assessment should be of paramount importance. New models of governance are to be sought not only to bring government and constituencies closer together, but are also to be adapted to today's fast pace of technological progress, changes in consumption patterns, shifting forms of communication, growing relevance of efficiency, and many other novelties that are already changing the world. Politics needs to change in response to the new problems faced by and expectations of the citizenry.

Circumstances are pushing us to consider other forms of democracy and governance beyond the traditional ones. The meeting will therefore focus on identifying the root causes of the disenchantment and key responses, including alternative or new models of governance.

¹ The "Democracy Perception Index 2018" conducted by Dalia Research in collaboration with the Alliance of Democracies and Rasmussen Global.

Questions for consideration include:

- What are the root causes of the growing disenchantment towards current forms of democratic governance, including parliaments?
- Why is there such a growing disconnect with citizens? Do citizens have unrealistic expectations of their politicians? Do citizens have too much or too little information to form their opinion? Have too many politicians focused on the wrong priorities, hence the populist backlash?
- Are democracy and parliaments compatible with the business model of social media, big tech and the media and the growing need to respond to issues on an almost immediate basis?
- What are some new ways of moving forward? Are "hybrid models" that include representative, dialogic and direct democratic governance schemes an option? What is the role or place of parliaments in that respect?
- What is the role of the IPU and how can it contribute to rethinking global governance models? How can international organizations, like the IPU, also evolve? What other ways or models of functioning can be developed for them to improve the perception citizens have of them?