



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Video Message

**Hon. Mr. Duarte Pacheco
President of the IPU**

Delivered by pre-recorded video

**Special Session of the General
Assembly against corruption**

New York, 4 June 2021

President Bozkir,

Excellences,

It is a great honour to join you today to share a parliamentary perspective on addressing corruption, an issue that remains critical to restoring faith in government and to putting the SDGs back on track.

The IPU devoted its joint 2021 Parliamentary Hearing in cooperation with your office, to this issue of corruption, in an effort to engage parliaments and parliamentarians more closely in the process for the Political Declaration that will be adopted at this Special Session.

As a result, I can tell you that the IPU supports this text in its entirety. The text captures well many of the issues that we discussed at the hearing while also highlighting in vivid colours the role of parliaments in preventing and combating corruption.

The Declaration's reach to underlying governance questions, such as the need to ensure free and fair elections, or to safeguard the independence of the judiciary, is also very welcome.

I very much appreciate the pledge in the Declaration to support inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation, including through the IPU, to facilitate the exchange of good practices relating to legislation, oversight and translation of good practices into domestic law.

I note that the Declaration might have been stronger on the role of women both as victims of corruption and as key actors in the fight against corruption.

Consistent with the IPU's strong focus on gender equality and women's empowerment, our parliamentary hearing devoted a whole session to understanding the many subtle ways in which women are affected by this issue. This discussion led to a number of recommendations such as the need for anti-corruption frameworks to include measures to address sexual harassment and sexual favours as a form of bribery.

Over and above the many concrete recommendations to prevent and fight corruption, what is needed in most countries, including in advanced democracies, is a deeper push for a cultural shift against corruption, as well as stronger political will.

In too many places, corruption is still treated as an inevitable fact of life when it is, in fact a violation of rights, a breach of the public trust, and a waste of taxpayers' money that must be denounced, reported and prosecuted vigorously.

As opinion-makers and representatives of the people, parliamentarians need to be models of honesty, transparency and accountability. They need to lead a society-wide effort to shift attitudes about corruption.

This is why nothing offends me more, as president of the IPU, than the case of political leaders who are themselves at the receiving end of bribes in return for political favours. I support wholeheartedly the Declaration's recommendation to criminalize more consistently, trading in influence, abuse of functions, and illicit enrichment that involve public officials – be they elected or appointed.

In this regard, stronger measures are needed to prosecute cases of *grand corruption* involving political leaders who steal from the public purse without impunity. While our hearing found no consensus on the establishment of a criminal court to investigate such cases, it is clear that much more can be done to track ill-gotten money in tax havens, disclose the real beneficial ownership of those assets, and ultimately, put the money back where it belongs.

As we enter a new phase of implementation of the 2005 Convention against Corruption, the IPU will continue to highlight this issue as part of its core mission of democracy-building.

Democracy is far from being a sufficient condition to prevent corruption, but it is definitely a necessary one.

Thank you for your attention.