



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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IPU Statement

**Hon. Ms. Paddy Torsney
Permanent Observer to the
United Nations**

**High-Level Plenary Meeting of the
General Assembly to commemorate
and promote the International Day of
Multilateralism and Diplomacy for
Peace**

New York, 24 April 2019

President,

This first International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace compels us to take a hard look at the UN-led system of global governance and at the root causes of growing distrust in democratic institutions around the world.

This was the central theme of February's joint Parliamentary Hearing at the UN, which engaged over 200 parliamentarians. The Hearing showed strong support for multilateralism within the global parliamentary community but also underscored the need for deep reforms to make the UN more effective.

Business as usual is not an option.

Multilateralism, like democracy, is work in progress toward an ideal; work that must never stop as it is the only hope for the future of our people and our planet.

As the beloved Dag Hammarskjöld said: "the UN was not created to take us to heaven but to save us from hell."

Thankfully, parliamentarians are no longer bystanders in foreign relations but active participants. Parliaments are the essential link between the people and the UN as their global organization.

Properly informed of UN decision-making processes and institutional reforms, parliamentarians can help hold governments to account for their international commitments and can be additional sounding boards to important UN processes.

As we heard at the Hearing, one major reason why multilateralism is in crisis is that people don't trust their own governments and by extension the inter-governmental organizations to which they belong. Too many governments are seen as acting in the interest of the few, deepening inequalities and denying increasing numbers their human rights.

Paradoxically, the distance between global institutions and the people, has grown instead of narrowing, despite global challenges such as climate change, migration, nuclear disarmament, and terrorism where multilateral solutions are most needed.

There is no real contradiction between sovereign rights and multilateral solutions. As the President of the IPU noted, the national interest is best served by participating in global processes that bring all countries together.

But international agreements are worth nothing if they are not properly implemented. Failure to deliver on our commitments leads to more disenchantment with governments and with multilateralism. Our Hearing reiterated the key role of parliaments in the implementation of agreements such as the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement on climate change and many others.

The IPU will continue to help build bridges between parliaments and the UN as it has done for the last twenty years. We will promote parliamentary debates as the UN seeks to retool all its major bodies, and more discussion in parliaments on the UN budget, which most parliamentarians don't understand well.

In the words of one Hearing presenter, "people everywhere must see and feel that everything we do here is for them."

This is truly our challenge today. To restore faith in multilateralism, we must strengthen accountability and transparency from the bottom up and all around.

Thank you.