



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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**Senator Juan Carlos Romero
President of the IPU Standing
Committee on United Nations
Affairs**

**8th Forum of the United Nations
Alliance of Civilizations
Group of Friends Meeting
New York, 20 November 2018**

President,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the IPU in my capacity as President of the IPU Standing Committee on UN Affairs as well as a senator from Argentina. I am here with a delegation of colleagues from Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, and Ukraine.

Looking around the world today, it is obvious that hatred and intolerance are not waning. A measure of this is the issue of migration, one of the four work pillars of the AOC.

Paradoxically, this issue has grown more contentious during the years of the AOC than before. The issue is clearly not just of an economic nature. Deep down, it's really about xenophobia and racism, the fear that somehow people of different colour and cultural traditions might undermine our identity, the sense of who we are.

Some people forget that “who we are” is more often than not a function of what others contribute to our lives in so many ways. A wonderful African expression, Ubuntu, says it all: *I am because we are*.

What explains this new wave of intolerance?

One possibility that stands out is that we are paying the price of bad economic policies that, over the years, have brought us the worst case of inequality and uncertainty in modern history. Our winner-take-all society that leaves the vast majority worse off, with precarious work or no work at all, weaker safety nets and a deteriorating environment, is causing anger and frustration everywhere.

This downward spiral is compounded by warmongering and political power games for influence and control that some governments like to engage in, often regardless of what their own people say.

It takes more than the AOC to reverse this course. The whole world must be mobilized to restore social justice, uphold fundamental freedoms, and protect the environment on which our lives depend.

In short, we need more democracy all around.

The AOC is a vehicle to promote greater understanding and respect among civilizations, cultures and religions, but it cannot succeed alone. Its success depends on the entire UN and all of its member states, where real authority resides, advancing a variety of institutional and policy reforms.

As the five-year work plan of the AOC draws to an end this year, a reset is needed to endow the AOC with new tools and more stable financial resources.

The AOC must be more than a meeting place outside the UN. It needs to provide a dynamic two-way link between the formal processes of the UN and the world outside. The AOC also needs to strengthen its presence at the country level with national chapters that help promote its key messages and success stories.

President,

There are 46,000 parliamentarians around the world. Together, they form a very diverse community with tremendous power to influence public opinion and create the conditions for peaceful dialogue in our societies.

As the world organization of national parliaments, the IPU is doing all it can with its many meetings, publications, and growing online presence to mobilize parliamentarians behind the issues that lie at the core of the AOC.

Migration is one such issue. Over the last two years, we have worked to bring the process for the Global Compact for Migration closer to the parliamentary community with countless debates and meetings at various locations. As a result, our members are ready to endorse the GCM as a sensible framework for migration governance and have pledged to help implement it in the years ahead.

Youth is another pillar of the AOC where we have been particularly active over the past few years. Among other things, we have created a whole new Forum of Young Parliamentarians to help highlight youth issues and to support a better representation of young people in parliaments. This, we hope, will help bring fresh ideas and new perspectives on how to defeat the forces of hatred and intolerance around the world.

To conclude, we pledge our continued support for the mission of the AOC and hope very much that more governments will join our group of friends in a sign of confidence in the AOC and of hope for the future.

Thank you.