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REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA
Parliament



Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (5WCSP)

Report on the Conference, Vienna, Austria, 7-8 September 2021



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Foreword by the IPU President, Duarte Pacheco

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted every facet of our lives, and parliaments have not escaped unscathed. They have been compelled to embrace new technologies to an extent unthinkable just two years ago, and the IPU has also proved its adaptability and continued effectiveness, rapidly pivoting the Fifth World Conference of Speakers to a virtual format in 2020 and holding its first ever virtual Assembly in May 2021.

But no matter how far the technology advances, a videoconference can never be a satisfactory substitute for face-to-face contact. Thanks largely to the perseverance of the Austrian Parliament, Speakers from all over the world were finally able to meet again in person in the beautiful and historic city of Vienna in early September 2021, nearly two years after the last major in-person IPU meeting.

Many of the challenges we discussed in Vienna are regrettably familiar: ensuring sustainable development, renewing multilateralism, countering hate speech and terrorism, working towards a new global social compact on gender equality, increasing youth representation, and protecting and strengthening democracy. But all these issues must now be viewed through the lens of a sustainable, fair and green recovery from the pandemic. We can only achieve this by working together, sharing ideas and visions and embracing positive and transformative change. I hope that this Conference, and the high-level declaration we adopted, provides a strong foundation for this recovery.



Introduction by the IPU Secretary General, Martin Chungong

Meeting face-to-face in Vienna was quite simply a dream come true. Digital democracy is clearly here to stay, and virtual meetings will undoubtedly form an important part of the work of parliaments and international organizations for years to come, even when COVID-19 is a distant memory. But the in person segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers, held in Vienna on 7 and 8 September 2021, felt long overdue. While at times over the past year a cancellation or further postponement seemed likely, the determination of our Austrian hosts and the members of the Preparatory Committee motivated everyone involved to make the event a resounding success.

The Conference itself, including keynote speeches from several important personalities, lively interactive debates on key issues of the day and complementary in-depth panel discussions, was just one of several components of this momentous week.

The 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament set the stage on 6 September and ensured that gender equality, in parliaments and society in general, was a thread that ran through the whole week.

Equally important were the huge number of bilateral meetings between Speakers in the margins of the Conference and the close involvement of the United Nations Office in Vienna and the various specialized agencies of the UN based in the city in many aspects of the week's events.

This publication provides an overview of the deliberations of the Conference, notably including the high-level declaration adopted by Speakers on *parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for the people and the planet*.

Background

The [first Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments](#) took place in August 2000, when parliamentary leaders from around the world assembled at UN Headquarters in New York and set forth their *Parliamentary Vision for International Cooperation at the Dawn of the Third Millennium*. This vision was embraced by the Heads of State and Government, in the UN Millennium Declaration adopted just a few short weeks later, wherein they pledged to “*strengthen further cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and gender issues.*”

Since then, every five years, the IPU, in cooperation with the United Nations, has convened the World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. The subsequent World Conferences in [2005](#) (New York), [2010](#) (Geneva) and [2015](#) (New York), all played a critical role in further developing the parliamentary dimension to international cooperation in general and the work of the United Nations in particular.

At the start of 2020, preparations were well under way for the fifth such Conference to be held in Vienna, Austria, but the COVID-19 pandemic led to the decision to hold a [virtual segment of the Conference](#) in August 2020. The [in-person segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament](#) was finally held in Vienna on 7 and 8 September 2021, attended by Speakers and delegations from over 100 Member Parliaments, as well as high-level representatives from some 20 regional and other parliamentary organizations. The full list of participants is available on the [IPU website](#).

Preparations for the Conference were guided by a Preparatory Committee (see p. xx), chaired by the IPU President and composed of parliamentary leaders from all regions, representatives of the IPU Executive Committee, the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, the Secretary General of the IPU, and a high-level representative of the UN Secretary-General. The Committee prepared the programme and modalities for the Conference, and it drafted a preliminary outcome document which was circulated among all national parliaments for their input and suggestions. The high-level Declaration on *parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for the people and the planet* (see pp. xx), was adopted by acclamation at the closing session of the Conference.



Inaugural session

Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General, said that it was a dream come true to finally meet in person after so long. He thanked the hosts, the Austrian Parliament, for their hospitality and commitment to making the Conference a reality.



Mr. Peter Raggl, President of the Austrian Federal Council, expressed his hope that the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic was now over and that the Conference would be the first of many opportunities for renewed face-to-face contact between parliamentarians worldwide. The pandemic had demonstrated how global problems often had a direct impact at the local level and the same applied to many of the other challenges facing the world, notably climate change and the quest for sustainable development. Parliamentarians played a vital role in bridging the gap between local and global matters.



Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the Austrian National Council, highlighted Vienna's historical role as a centre of international diplomacy and noted the importance of human contact in building mutual trust and understanding. The international community had pulled together, often via virtual means, to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the same reinvigorated multilateral approach should now be deployed in pursuit of peace and sustainable development. Parliamentarians had a responsibility to their constituents to find cross-border solutions to cross-border problems, by working together in a respectful and open way with their counterparts from around the world.

Ms. Alexandra Bosek, representing 1.2 million young people as the President of the Austrian Student Union, urged Speakers of Parliament not to view young people as the future but as the present. The decisions that parliaments were taking in relation to the environment, digitalization, the media and education affected everyone, and the value of involving young people in the decision-making process must not be underestimated. Young people wanted to play a role in society and needed to be able to count on a system of representation in which their voices were heard.



Ms. Tone Wilhelmsen Trøen, President of the Storting in Norway and Chair of the 13th World Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, reported on the outcome of the Summit, which had brought together 26 women Speakers of parliament the previous day. In the first of two interactive debates, the Speakers had recognized and paid tribute to women who had played a key role in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. In the second, they had focused their deliberations on the future, identifying how to preserve and consolidate women's achievements and ensure that no women or girl would be left behind. She called on those present to mobilize parliaments towards concrete policies for lasting change in the fight for gender equality.

Mr. Duarte Pacheco, IPU President, highlighted the recent crises in Afghanistan, Guinea, Myanmar and Venezuela, which had given new impetus to the Conference as a crucial opportunity for Speakers to come together to examine and re-energize multilateralism. Speakers also needed to make use of the Conference to address the many overlapping challenges the world was facing: the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, the global gender gap, and the need to rejuvenate democracy, including through increased youth participation. He encouraged Speakers to answer the call of a troubled world through ideas, visions, pledges to action and the adoption of a high-level declaration that would be tabled on the second day of the Conference.

In a video message, the 19-year-old Mexican-Chilean climate activist **Ms. Xiye Bastida** urged Speakers to remember the commitment they had made in the virtual segment of the Conference in 2020 to address the climate crisis in parallel with the recovery from COVID-19. The climate crisis was a generational injustice that parliaments and governments had the power to address. The world must strive to become less materialistic and more in tune with nature, with a view to achieving net zero emissions and staying below 1.5 degrees of warming.

A video from **Ms. Valérie Masson-Delmotte**, one of the co-authors of the recently released *Sixth Assessment Report* from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, was also shown. The report presented unequivocal evidence that humans were responsible for climate change and that its effects were widespread, rapid and intensifying, with extreme events affecting every region on Earth. Temperatures would continue to rise regardless of actions taken now, but the report proposed numerous solutions, in particular with a view to working towards net zero CO2 emissions and reducing the emissions of other gases.



Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President-elect of the 76th UN General Assembly and a former Speaker of the Parliament of the Maldives, said that, in the face of multiple crises, billions of people around the world were looking to their political representatives for hope. He had therefore chosen “hope” as the theme of his presidency and of the 76th session of the General Assembly, which would prioritize five “rays of hope”: an equitable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in terms of access to vaccines; a better, stronger and greener recovery, reigniting progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals; ambitious and fast action on climate change and the environment; the promotion and protection of human rights in the face of rising discrimination; and reform and empowerment of the United Nations, bringing its work closer to the people.

In a video message, **UN Secretary-General Mr. Antonio Guterres** emphasized the role of parliaments in connecting people to power and bridging the gap between global and local. The UN was counting on parliaments to secure ambitious action on climate change, to advance human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, to implement stronger social protection and safety nets for all, to increase support for girls and women, and to reflect the will of all people as they struggled through a perilous moment in history.



Finally, **special guest Ms. Fawzia Koofi**, a former parliamentarian and peace activist who had fled Afghanistan just days earlier, said that the crisis in Afghanistan was the latest test for parliamentary leadership and multilateralism and urged Speakers to help the Afghan people by showing solidarity and providing safe havens for those most at risk. She called on the international community to make it clear to the new authorities in Afghanistan that recognition and cooperation would only be possible if women were given the right to fully participate in society and that all Afghans were given the right to decide on their country’s future.

Interactive general debate

Prior to the Conference, the Preparatory Committee decided to adopt a *Doha Debates*-style format for the general debate, with motions on five topical issues introduced by panellists presenting juxtaposing points of view in order to

stimulate interaction among the delegations present. Five panel discussions took place in parallel with these motions, with a view to allowing more in-depth discussion of specific complementary themes.

Motion 1

The first motion of the interactive general debate was *Achieving sustainable development requires more attention on human well-being and environmental preservation than on economic growth*. Four Speakers of parliament introduced the motion with a range of juxtaposing viewpoints.

Ms. Beatriz Argimón of Uruguay noted that, for a developing country like hers, economic growth was an essential prerequisite for sustainable development in order to fight poverty and build a more equal society, but human well-being and environmental preservation were also indispensable.



Mr. Steingrímur J. Sigfússon of Iceland said that, although the COVID-19 pandemic had deflected attention, the climate crisis still loomed, with much graver consequences for humanity. It was therefore high time to rethink the usual focus on economic growth as the dominant measure of success, by respecting nature and finding innovative ways to measure human well-being.

Ms. Puan Maharani of Indonesia expressed the view that a careful balance needed to be found between all three aspects – social welfare, economic development and environmental protection – in order to achieve all of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Mr. Abass Chernor Bundu of Sierra Leone noted that human well-being was about more than wealth and income and that humankind had a duty of care to the environment. In a highly interdependent world, it was essential to work together to achieve both national goals and global sustainable development.

In the ensuing debate, 16 Speakers, Deputy Speakers or heads of delegation took the floor. Many expressed their support for the Sustainable Development Goals as the embodiment of the balance between the three factors outlined in the motion and noted that governments needed to set their own priorities within that framework according to their own situation. The majority agreed that climate change was the greatest challenge facing the world and that transformational change was needed to address it. The environment needed to be protected to ensure peace and stability and, inversely, peace and stability was required to allow the pursuit of sustainable development. The tourist economy on which many countries depended also often relied on the protection of the natural environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a unique opportunity to refocus development priorities. Economic growth would be a key factor of the post-pandemic recovery but needed to be decoupled from environmental harm, such as rising greenhouse gas emissions. Some Speakers noted that GDP could not capture the level of human wellbeing or environmental preservation in a given country and that work needed to be done to build on measures such as the Human Development Index or to develop completely new measures of human well-being. The development of human capital, through education and good health care, also needed to be taken into consideration.

Motion 2

The second motion was *The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic challenges multilateralism's ability to deliver for the people*. Three Speakers of parliament and a representative of an IPU observer introduced the motion with a range of juxtaposing viewpoints.

Mr. Manzoor Nadir of Guyana said that multilateralism had not failed us, but we had failed it. The immediate response to the pandemic had been to close borders and become insular and selfish. Multilateralism had ultimately come to the rescue, in particular through the sharing of vaccines.

Ms. Valentina Matviyenko of the Russian Federation said that, in a world more interconnected than ever, there was a dire need for open and trusting international dialogue. National and bloc-based egoism were preventing progress, as shown during the COVID-19 pandemic, in which whole countries had been deprived of essential medicines and vaccines.

Mr. Othmar Karas of the European Parliament said that it was more urgent than ever to foster mutual respect and to work together to reach global targets. It was the collective responsibility of elected representatives to find solutions to global problems, such as addressing climate change and ensuring peace, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Mr. Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda of Zimbabwe said that widespread vaccine nationalism, or vaccine imperialism, during the pandemic ran counter to the spirit of multilateralism. Africa in particular still had very low levels of vaccination but would need to be vaccinated in order to protect the whole world.

In the ensuing debate, 12 Speakers, Deputy Speakers or heads of delegation took the floor. Some spoke of the need during the pandemic to open up new transport corridors for trade and for developed countries to increase their support to developing countries. Many cited the COVAX facility as a triumph of multilateralism and noted that most of the COVID-19 vaccines now available had relied on international cooperation for their development and were composed of ingredients sourced from many different countries.

Some Speakers considered the current multilateral system to be outdated, dominated by superpowers and blocs of countries, and in need of a radical overhaul, as illustrated by its obvious failings during the pandemic. Others spoke of the worrying rise of nationalism. There was broad consensus that no country could deal with a global crisis alone and that the world needed to be better prepared for future pandemics and other disasters. Solidarity needed to play a key role in a successful multilateral system. The interdependence of the modern world was an immutable reality and multilateralism was the only viable means by which to overcome global challenges.



Motion 3

The third motion was *Countering misinformation and hate speech requires stronger regulations*. Three Speakers of parliament and a representative of an IPU observer introduced the motion with a range of juxtaposing viewpoints.

Ms. Claudia Ledesma Abdala of Argentina said that fake news and hate speech were growing phenomena that had become more visible and durable in the virtual world. Anonymous and defamatory posts online that led to malicious acts and even violence went well beyond the bounds of freedom of expression. Social media companies needed to find agile and effective mechanisms to address the problem.



Mr. Rik Daems of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe said that parliaments had a responsibility to set red lines between free speech and mistruths. Those who promulgated hate speech needed to be held accountable.

Ms. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury of Bangladesh noted that excessive regulation potentially threatened freedom of speech and that education and raising awareness was more important. Hate speech was symptomatic of broader societal problems such as poverty and inequality, which needed to be addressed.

Mr. Femi Gbajablamila of Nigeria said that countering misinformation was a moral responsibility and that the right to free speech was not absolute. Legal mechanisms were required that allowed for free speech but held to account those who disseminated misinformation and hate.

In the ensuing debate, 14 Speakers, Deputy Speakers and heads of delegation took the floor. It was noted that some regulations on freedom of speech were several decades old and therefore did not foresee the ease of mass communication via the Internet. Three distinct aspects needed to be considered when attempting to regulate misinformation and hate speech: production, distribution and reception. Different approaches were also needed for misinformation in comparison to hate speech.

The dominance of certain multinational social media and technology companies needed to be challenged and their activities regulated. Some Speakers made reference to the normalization of hate speech by populist politicians. The Kuwait delegation highlighted the proposal it had made to the IPU President requesting the establishment of an IPU committee on social media use. Many Speakers emphasized the importance of education and awareness, in terms of preventing hate speech and misinformation but also ensuring that the wider public were media literate.

Motion 4

The fourth motion was *Repealing laws that discriminate against women and girls is the only path towards achieving gender equality*. Three Speakers of parliament and a representative of an IPU observer introduced the motion with a range of juxtaposing viewpoints.

In a video message, **Ms. Tanzila Narbaeva of Uzbekistan** spoke of the importance of encouraging and supporting women in decision-making and leadership positions. Initiatives relating to education, in particular supporting women in higher education, and healthcare, notably reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, were also vital tools.

Mr. Om Birla of India noted that discrimination on the basis of gender was prohibited in his country and that, depending on the body, up to half of seats in India's elected bodies were reserved for women. Many schemes and initiatives had been set up in India to ensure the protection and empowerment of women and priority was given to education, health and nutrition programmes aimed at women.



Mr. Kenneth Makelo Lusaka of Kenya said that laws alone were not sufficient to ensure gender equality but political, cultural and socioeconomic factors that hindered progress towards true equality also needed to be addressed. Legal frameworks must aim to protect women against all forms of discrimination.

Ms. Fanny Salinas Fernandez of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) said that institutional injustice needed to be eliminated so that laws promoting gender equality could be effectively applied. Many laws on gender equality were sound in theory but fell short in genuinely protecting women and girls.

In the ensuing debate, 10 Speakers, Deputy Speakers and heads of delegation took the floor. Many expressed their support for points made by the movers of the motion: that constitutional provisions were required to ensure that gender equality was an integral part of all legislation, that cultural and societal change was needed in addition to laws and government initiatives, and that imperfect laws often did not protect and advance women in the way intended.

The COVID-19 pandemic had considerably worsened the lives of women in many ways, set back hard-won progress towards gender equality and revealed flaws in laws intended to improve the situation of women and girls. Other crises, such as the climate crisis and escalating conflicts, also tended to impact women most. It had been demonstrated repeatedly that women had a vital role to play in conflict resolution. A focus on family friendly policies was one way to recognize the impact of unpaid domestic and care work on women and reduce the burden accordingly. In some countries, laws were still in place that discriminated against women in relation to property ownership or financial equality. The Beijing Declaration in 1995 had recognized that women's rights were an indivisible part of all human rights, but work was still required to ensure that principle was reflected in national laws.

Motion 5

The fifth motion was *Emergency measures imposed by the government must always be subject to parliamentary approval and regular review*. Two Speakers of parliament and a representative of an IPU observer introduced the motion with a range of juxtaposing viewpoints.

Mr. Roberto Fico of Italy said that the world had faced a succession of crises in recent years – armed conflict, natural disasters, financial crises and the COVID-19 pandemic – in response to which governments had had no choice but to take emergency measures. Nonetheless, the continuity of parliaments must be ensured even during an emergency. Parliaments were an indispensable mechanism to speak on behalf of citizens and guarantee their rights.



Ms. Christine Razanamahasoa of Madagascar emphasized the importance of consensus on emergency measures wherever possible. Parliaments had a role to play in ensuring that governments had the necessary finances to handle emergencies. They also needed to reach out to the public and foster trust in the measures taken.

Mr. Jorge Pizarro of the Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO) said that all state institutions had a role to play in a crisis. Parliaments expressed the will and sovereignty of the people they represented and provided transparency on the decisions of the executive. However, parliaments had become increasingly focused on niche topics and in many cases were in thrall to populism or demagoguery, thus hindering rapid action in a crisis and damaging stability.

In the ensuing debate, 10 Speakers, Deputy Speakers and heads of delegation took the floor. Speakers noted that parliamentary consensus conferred legitimacy on emergency measures and that parliaments should generally oversee the actions of governments rather than hindering them. Emergency measures must maintain fundamental rights and allow continued economic activity but the temporary suspension of such rights could be allowed in exceptional circumstances. Emergency legislation must be used sparingly and parliaments should be transparent about why decisions were taken.

Many Speakers mentioned the need to be better prepared for the next major emergency and to learn lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. Parliaments needed to be flexible and to avoid overreacting under pressure. The continuity of parliamentary business in a crisis was vital, to ensure that governments were held to account and the people were kept informed and supportive of measures that might adversely affect their everyday lives. The exchange of best practices between different parliaments around the world was also important.

Panel 1

The first panel discussion was on the theme *Towards a new global compact for gender equality*. The panel comprised Ms. Fawzia Zainal, Speaker of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain, Mr. Louis Gbehounou Vlavonou, President of the National Assembly, Ms. Hana Bixi, Global Director of the World Bank's Gender Group and Mr. Thomas Stelzer, Dean of the International Anti-Corruption Academy.



The panellists helped identify the transformative agenda needed to promote gender equality by diving deeper into what gender equality entailed and looking at three aspects of equality, namely: legal equality, economic equality and power equality.

On legal equality, the panel reflected on whether our laws granted women and men equal standing and looked at what values guide the legal frameworks of our communities. The panel found that there were good practices of how legislation had been used to bridge the gender gap. In Benin, a law had been created to allocate 30 per cent of the national budget to the education of girls, sending 80 per cent of girls to school through micro-credit. In Norway, a landmark law had been introduced to require 40 per cent of board members in all publicly owned and listed companies to be women.

Aside from those good practices, there was a big gap between what the law said and what was being practised in many countries. Thus, lawmakers needed to be vigilant in ensuring that laws that promoted gender equality were properly carried out. Mechanisms should be put in place to monitor the implementation of those laws and identify how they could be improved.

On economic equality, the panel looked at where the money went and if budgetary resources benefitted all equally. The panel discussed what it would take to ensure that women and men had equal access to social protection and equal pay.

The panel agreed that no country could achieve its full potential without the equal participation of women and men in the economy. The most-recent *Women, Business and the Law study* by the World Bank's Gender Group had found that only 44 economies offered paid parental leave. Paid parental leave and similar policies were linked to more women remaining in the workforce. As women left their jobs because of the higher burden of domestic work due to the pandemic, reforms that ensured economic equality of opportunity for women and men were needed more than ever.

Lastly, the panel talked about power equality, looking into who was speaking and deciding for future generations, and whether political processes and spaces allowed for the equal participation of all. The panel reflected on what worked in expanding diversity for political representation. The panel found that the lack of political and economic leverage that women had in many countries reduced their ability to demand accountability or voice their concerns about corruption. It was necessary to work towards women occupying more seats in parliament and government. Quotas and reserved seats helped in ensuring that women could realize their full potential in public life. They also helped in creating more diverse decision-making bodies that better reflected the needs and aspirations of the broader population.

Gender equality was a crucial component of sustainable development, peace and democracy, and was necessary for the achievement of all the SDGs. However, in many parts of the world, the pandemic had eroded hard-won progress in all three kinds of equalities mentioned.

In building back better after COVID-19, Speakers of Parliament had an important role in promoting a robust agenda for gender equality. Speakers had a responsibility to continue to be vigilant in protecting equality in all its forms, even in times of crisis. That agenda must be grounded on full equality between women and men in all areas of life and the pursuit of equal outcomes, benefits and services adapted to everyone's needs.

Panel 2

The second panel discussion was on *Mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on democracy* and was introduced by Ms. Meritxell Batet, President of the Congress of Deputies of Spain, Mr. Kabiru Gaya, Senator, representing Mr. Ahmad Lawan, President of the Senate of Nigeria, and Mr. Kevin Casas-Zamora, Secretary-General of International IDEA. It was moderated by Mr. Alex Kuprecht, President of the Council of States of Switzerland, who also acted as rapporteur to the closing plenary session on 8 September. In all, 15 Speakers and Deputy Speakers of parliament took part in the panel debate.



The panellists noted that for almost two years, daily lives had been dominated by the pandemic. But COVID-19 was far from being just a health crisis. In order to protect the population, political measures had had to be taken and restrictions introduced.

In a democracy, citizens were used to being able to have their say, to participate. Suddenly, however, decisions were being made over their heads. In many places, people's understanding had been great in the first phase, partly because the rules were clear and applied equally to everyone. In the second phase, understanding of the restrictions had decreased noticeably. Some people had even questioned the democratic legitimacy of the protective measures and their compatibility with the rule of law.

The debate underscored the fact that parliaments had never stopped working during the pandemic. Many parliaments had adopted new online procedures to allow them to meet, which could potentially continue in some form after the pandemic had ended. Parliamentarians had put many questions to their governments about the pandemic response. In some countries, legislative activity had even increased, as many laws had needed to be passed.

The pandemic had however put some issues in a new light. Parliaments had often been called upon to approve radical measures such as restrictions on freedom of movement. Usually, when parliament expressed its opinion, such matters were decided by a simple majority vote. During the panel debate,

the opinion was raised that a simple majority vote might not be sufficient in exceptional cases. To ensure popular consent, parliaments might wish to consider if measures that restrict or deviate from fundamental rights should require an enhanced majority, such as the two-thirds majority frequently required for constitutional changes.

Meanwhile, the response to the pandemic had become a new arena for political contest. The climate of fear and uncertainty had provided fertile ground for those who wished to exploit social fractures, for example by spreading misinformation about the virus through social media. Once again, parliaments had been challenged to find appropriate responses to misinformation while also guaranteeing the right to freedom of opinion.

Speakers in the debate noted that threats to democracy had not originated with the pandemic. Rather, the pandemic had deepened pre-existing threats, such as the rise of authoritarianism and populism. The pandemic had aggravated inequality, not invented it. Parliaments had had to address those phenomena, as well as the underlying causes that contributed to a decline in public trust.

Rarely had the examination of democratic culture, values and structures been so necessary. The debate must continue as parliaments sought effective ways to protect and promote democratic norms, including in times of crisis.

Panel 3

The third panel was on the theme *The post-pandemic recovery: Transforming the economy to combat climate change and promote sustainable development*. It was moderated by Dame Eleanor Laing, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, United Kingdom, and featured the Speakers of Parliament from Mozambique and Cyprus, along with experts from the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The panel discussed key parliamentary actions that could be taken to facilitate the transformation of economic systems so that climate and development commitments linked to the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) could be met.

Panellists noted that severe economic setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the impacts of a changing climate were challenging sustainable development. All countries were facing concurrent health, climate and ecological crises, which were interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Climate change and the unsustainable exploitation of the environment had led to increased risks of zoonotic diseases and pandemics, water scarcity and extreme weather events with far-reaching consequences in terms of food insecurity, population displacement and conflict.

The SDGs provided a framework for inclusive and sustainable policies and should be the basis for COVID-19 recovery strategies so as to address persisting inequalities and leave no one behind. The Paris Agreement further provided common objectives to address climate change, but national ratification and domestication as well as international cooperation and solidarity were required to fulfil global commitments. Parliaments had a key role to play in ensuring SDG implementation through legislation and oversight and they could also play a fundamental role in attaining the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic must be transformed into opportunities for thinking strategically and building a more resilient world. The alignment of investments for healthy people and a healthy planet and the transition towards a green economy was a stimulus for growth rather than a constraint. The consequences of the triple planetary crisis were not equally distributed and redistribution of growth was paramount. Particular attention needed to be paid to social inclusion, as the consequences of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately affected vulnerable populations. Inclusion was also supported by economic arguments to expand and diversify markets.



Innovation was a key factor for embracing circular economies and transitioning towards low-carbon and carbon neutral societies. It could be promoted through education, investments in the young generation and policies supporting research and application of new technologies. Parliaments and governments needed to act with nature, and adopt technologies based on nature, as a way to address climate change and build resilient societies and communities. Knowledge sharing and multi-stakeholder collaboration could further contribute to building human and institutional capacities.

Climate change was the most pressing issue of our times: urgent action was needed to avoid an irreversible crisis. Only a decade was left to deliver on the Global Goals and the Paris Agreement. The upcoming COP26 meeting must deliver in providing solutions from a global perspective, including addressing the issue of financing the fight against climate change and articulating the nexus between climate change, sustainable development and peace, but keeping in mind the diversity of individual country contexts. The IPU, together with its Member Parliaments, would continue to provide a platform to ensure a parliamentary dimension in climate negotiations.

Panel 4

The fourth panel was on the theme *Parliaments' openness, transparency and accessibility versus security: How to strike a balance?* It was moderated by Ms. Yawa Djigbodi Tsegan, Speaker of the National Assembly of Togo.

Speaker Tsegan stated that the nature of the threats made against parliaments and their members was evolving, moving to online realms and physical threats made outside of the parliaments. The need for parliaments to adapt to this twofold reality was at the centre of the panel discussion.

Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka, Speaker of the National Council of Austria, placed emphasis on transparency as being essential to democracy to ensure a certain counter-power and strengthen public trust. The Austrian parliament had been able to continue work and interact with Austrian citizens through the quick adoption of digital means of communication during the pandemic. However, there were considerable threats to those democratic processes, including bot manipulations, cyber-attacks, online defamation and hate speech.

Ms. Ināra Mūrniece, Speaker of the Saeima of Latvia, said that the Latvian Parliament had been able to speed up the digitalization process during the pandemic to ensure the continuation of parliamentary duties. Whether online or offline, misinformation could be harmful, and online technologies just facilitated its spread, sometimes even in Parliament. Societies must be vigilant about the risks associated with fake news

and balance them with transparency and awareness raising. The spread of hate speech should be strongly condemned, in particular when addressed towards people holding public office, including parliamentarians. However, strong regulation in this area could easily impact free speech, which also constituted a key element of democratic processes.

Mr. Saqr Ghobash, Speaker of the Federal National Council of United Arab Emirates, emphasized the role of transparency as a tool for sustainable representation of the citizens, explaining the need to establish clear and comprehensive exchanges of information between the parliaments and the people. Such a two-way interaction, improved by digital technologies, facilitated the delivery of inputs from the population and the sharing of processes and decisions from the parliament. Data safety and security were important areas to consider, as well as the need to actively combat cybercrime and cyberattacks to protect the right of citizens to express their opinions and strengthen the processes of transparency from governments and parliaments.

Mr. Momodou Malcolm Jallow, Member of the Swedish Parliament, shared his experience of facing online defamatory and racist comments and threats. Such threats had led him to



be under police protection, which had significantly impacted his ability to efficiently carry out his parliamentary functions. Threats to the security of MPs, both online and physically, were increasingly being made on the basis of identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religious beliefs, dissuading representatives from those groups from becoming MPs. Regardless of whether they were online or physical, such threats should be addressed as a security and democratic issue.

Mr. Neil Walsh of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime addressed the general misunderstanding of issues relating to cyberspace. Societies were increasingly reliant on digital technologies, which came with a multiplication of the threat and legislative difficulties of balancing privacy, individual freedoms and security. Markets for targeted cyberattacks and hacking were growing online, cryptocurrencies made illicit payment easy and untraceable, and States had access to cyberattack capabilities that could target infrastructures. All those issues required coordination, expertise and capacity building in parliaments, so as to accurately and democratically tackle them with appropriate legislation.

In ensuing interventions from the floor, the importance of transparency in parliaments was generally agreed upon and understood as a necessary pillar of democratic processes that facilitated accountability, reduced corruption and reinforced trust. Many Speakers welcomed the integration of digital solutions that facilitated the processes of transparency by allowing the public to access information and parliamentary proceedings and increasing direct interactions between parliamentarians and the people.

Parliaments had had to adapt their way of functioning because of the COVID-19 pandemic and had quickly resorted to digital technologies and use of cyberspace. However, although the adoption of digital technologies had contributed to preserving the systems of parliamentary democracy by facilitating communication processes, their complexity had also multiplied potential disruption and the risk of broader security threats. Cybersecurity was compared with physical security, and it was argued that the two areas had to be equally dealt with and funded by parliaments.

The use of digital technologies had also multiplied the threats made to parliamentarians online. Speakers agreed that anonymity had allowed for increased occurrences of intimidation campaigns, defamation and death threats to MPs. Some participants argued for restricting and punishing the perpetrators of such threats by giving police and magistrates greater means to identify them online. Others acknowledged the difficulties in attributing online actions to a physical person or group, and instead favoured a form of unrestricted speech and called for the prioritization of education, transparency and honesty in place of stronger regulation.

Panel 5

The fifth and final panel was on the theme *Parliaments and global governance: The unfinished agenda*. It was moderated by Mr. Andreas Norlen, Speaker of the Riksdag of Sweden.



Ms. Beatriz Argimón, President of the Senate of Uruguay, noted the timeliness of the Conference and highlighted the role parliaments had nationally and their relevance internationally, through legislation and representation. Parliaments were complementary to systems of global governance and should be strengthened, with inclusion, transparency and democratic debate at their heart.

Mr. Seán Ó Fearghail, Chairman of the Dail Eireann of Ireland, stressed the importance of inter-parliamentary exchanges as well as interactions with international organizations and forums, and reliance on expertise, especially when addressing issues of global importance. He noted the relationship between the executive and its representatives at the United Nations, and parliaments, which was often based on trust and recommendations, without specific protocols to guide such interactions. Such a mutually beneficial relationship could be deepened if parliamentary expertise was called upon more consistently and included in processes of global governance.

Mr. Nico Shrijver, Professor of International Law at Leiden University, Senator of the Netherlands, and former member of the IPU Executive Committee, joined the

panel remotely and highlighted the IPU's role in bridging the democratic deficit by strengthening the weight of Parliaments in global governance, making it stronger when supported by the people. The "we the peoples" of the UN Charter must include parliaments, representing the population, which benefitted or suffered from decisions taken globally. There were ways for parliaments to be included in multilateral forums through their governments. Further steps could be taken when drafting and negotiating treaties and agreements – some international organizations had parliamentary commissions that had access and influence over the drafting, but this was not seen everywhere. He concluded with what he called a "bold proposal" along the lines of a UN parliamentary assembly, where parliaments and members of parliaments could be represented. The opportunities for parliamentary engagement with the UN were there, and it was the role of parliaments and the IPU to seize them.

Ms. Kjersti Andersen, Permanent Representative of Norway to the UN in Vienna, highlighted the importance of national parliaments in setting budgets and ratifying treaties, two key functions of nations in relation to global governance. Furthermore, parliaments had a strong role in raising awareness

and activating stakeholders. Such efforts were strengthened and supported by the IPU, and the present Conference was a concrete example. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs had shown how the UN sought to impact local and national populations and how parliamentarians could have concrete impact. The informal processes of the UN often gathered together civil society, experts, NGOs and parliamentarians.

Three main themes stood out in the ensuing discussion: the role of parliaments beyond national borders; the need for collaboration on the global agenda; and the role of the IPU in facilitating interactions.

There was overall agreement on the need for parliaments to actively engage on problems of global magnitude. Global issues required global solutions that must be built with the inputs of parliaments, members of parliaments and the people. As the centrepiece of democracy, parliaments had already been included to some extent in the processes of global governance, but a framework to strengthen participation was welcomed. Work across parliaments was also needed, multilateralism was a key tool that parliaments could use to expand their influence and to multiply inputs in decision making.

While the idea of a UN Parliamentary Assembly generated some discussion, there was overall agreement that the lack of parliamentary inclusion in UN processes would be better solved using existing structures, notably the IPU. A common desire emerged to strengthen the role of the IPU in promoting and encouraging parliamentary interactions with UN processes and engaging as the peoples' representatives, at home and internationally, in building a more peaceful, equitable and inclusive world.

Closing session

In the closing session, rapporteurs presented the outcome of the five panel discussions. Delegations also expressed their solidarity with the people of Afghanistan in the context of the unfolding crisis and the Conference acknowledged the many countries that had already welcomed refugees from Afghanistan.

The high-level declaration on *parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for the people and the planet* (see pp. xx) was introduced by Ms. Beatriz Argimón, Vice President of Uruguay and Speaker of the Senate, representing the Preparatory Committee. Reservations had been received from Turkey on certain aspects of paragraph 4 (gender equality) and paragraph 12 (climate change). The delegations of Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, while supporting the Declaration as a whole, had submitted reservations on the concepts “people-centred measures” in paragraph 13 and “global community with a shared future for humankind” in paragraph 17. The delegation of the Netherlands noted for the record that the Speakers of Parliament of the Netherlands did not participate in the discussions on the Declaration, since their position in the parliamentary system of the Netherlands required them to strictly observe neutrality in debates of a political substance.

The high-level declaration was adopted by acclamation. It would be submitted to the UN General Assembly and Speakers were encouraged to implement its provisions in their own parliaments.

Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna and Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, said that the Conference had brought parliamentarians together at a pivotal moment and welcomed the commitments made in the high-level declaration to find a collective and inclusive way to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Special guest **Mr. Sebastian Kurz, Chancellor of Austria**, said that digital diplomacy had proven itself as a useful tool over the past 18 months but could never replace in-person meetings. He urged those present to work to reinvigorate the global economy and find ambitious solutions to the climate crisis and the peace and security challenges the world was facing.

Mr. Peter Raggl, President of the Austrian Federal Council, said that the bilateral meetings he had held in the margins of the Conference had shown that many countries were facing similar challenges and could benefit from regular interaction with their counterparts from around the world. It had been an honour for the Austrian Parliament to host the Conference and provide a platform for robust dialogue and effective multilateralism.

Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the Austrian National Council, said that the Conference had offered an opportunity to discuss the core issues of our time. Parliaments were facing issues that required courage, perseverance and a broad perspective and needed people to trust in them by demonstrating their transparency. The adoption of the high-level declaration was a triumph of strong democracy but Speakers now needed to take it back to their parliaments and use it as a roadmap for their future activities.

Closing the Conference, **Mr. Duarte Pacheco, IPU President**, thanked the Austrian hosts, the staff of the IPU, the teams of interpreters, and all the volunteers that had serviced the Conference. The COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in a new reality, to which parliamentarians needed to adapt. The high-level declaration set out some of the actions needed for a recovery that addressed climate change, gender equality, youth participation and led to a more inclusive democracy. Parliamentarians must continue to defend their colleagues in parliaments suffering the effects of crisis and conflict. He looked forward to seeing many of those present at the 143rd IPU Assembly in Madrid, Spain in November 2021.



High-level declaration

on parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for the people and the planet

1. In August 2020, we, the Speakers of Parliament, convened for the virtual segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. The world was five months into a global pandemic, with over 20 million recorded cases of COVID-19 infection and at least 750,000 deaths attributed to the virus. The virtual segment resulted in a commitment to strengthen international cooperation, solidarity and multilateral action, not only to lead the world out of crisis, but also to transform it for the better and to improve resilience. By the start of September 2021, the pandemic had resulted in close to 220 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection and over 4.5 million deaths, coupled with extensive disruptions to essential health systems in several regions, underscoring the urgent need for a well coordinated, multisectoral approach to the health emergency, ensuring surge capacity at all levels in all countries.
2. Our declaration in August 2020 underscored the critical importance of multilateralism and international solidarity in addressing the daunting socio-economic challenges of our time. As some countries finally start to emerge from the pandemic, this declaration rings truer than ever before. The very fact that we have been able to meet in person in Vienna is testimony to the significant progress that has been made through our collective efforts, in particular in terms of developing and delivering life-saving vaccines for all to ensure that no one is left behind. This Conference has granted many of us the first opportunity in over 18 months to meet in-person to share our experiences and lessons learned from the pandemic and to look forward with renewed hope to a positive recovery, founded on our shared endeavour to build back – and build forward – better.
3. The recovery must take account of the particular impact that the pandemic has had on women and girls, young and elderly people, persons with disabilities, marginalized and vulnerable populations, refugees, and communities affected by conflict. The recovery efforts must uphold the rule of law, democratic principles and universal human rights. The recovery must be inclusive, sustainable and green and must incorporate innovative solutions to the climate crisis. We must work together as one human family in facing epidemics and other crises, overcoming differences of all kinds and seeking to foster a culture of tolerance, coexistence and acceptance of the other. A renewed commitment by all parliamentarians worldwide to meaningful and effective multilateralism is critical to such a recovery.
4. We recognize that women have made a significant contribution on the front line of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. And yet, the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls, with lockdowns leaving them more vulnerable to domestic violence and increasing the burden of caring for children and the elderly. Women have also been more likely to lose employment or income as a result of the socio-economic downturn. Women and girls in conflict situations remain particularly vulnerable. All these situations have stressed the importance of putting gender equality and the empowerment of women at the heart of the COVID-19 response and recovery. We must build forward in a more gender-inclusive way and create a new global social compact for gender equality enabling the full and effective participation of women in all spheres of society. From this perspective, women must be part of the strategy and leadership of the COVID-19 recovery process, and the first step to achieving this is to ensure their equal and meaningful representation in parliaments, governments, private companies and other decision-making bodies.
5. We also acknowledge that social distancing and lockdown measures during the pandemic have had a devastating impact on youth, limiting their access to education and reducing their employment prospects, which has resulted in isolation and a surge in mental health issues. At the same time, young adults have undertaken vital front-line roles as healthcare, public utility and retail workers, as well as supporting their communities during the pandemic. We recognize these critical roles and pledge to harness the positive energy and innovativeness of young adults by making every effort to increase youth representation in our parliaments, including by joining the IPU Campaign *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament*, which is promoting several transformative actions. We also commit to promote initiatives aimed at educating and training young people in modern information technologies, thus preparing them for the jobs of the future.
6. The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a multifaceted crisis that has undermined progress in the achievement of the sustainable development goals, made States more fragile and eroded international cooperation, resulting in worldwide increases in poverty, hunger, inequality and violence. Parliaments must rise to the challenge by, first and foremost, protecting the norms and principles of peace, development, democracy, human rights and respect for the rule of law. We must also tap into the many benefits of

inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation in order to build bridges for better understanding, so as to lay the foundation for a more peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world where all people can live in freedom and dignity.

7. The global economic recovery must, therefore, be inclusive, with commitments to fight poverty and lessen inequality, reduce unemployment, and improve access to education and essential services. This should nurture renewed efforts to address the root causes of conflicts and build more peaceful, just and inclusive societies. As the United Nations has recognized, Parliaments have a key role to play in identifying bold and transformative actions to make the attainment of the SDGs a reality. With less than a decade to go, we commit ourselves once again to accelerating our efforts to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in our work as parliamentarians.
8. A sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic will depend to a large extent on international cooperation and solidarity. Accordingly, we reiterate our support for the World Health Organization, in particular in terms of its work on research, rapid response and better pandemic preparedness through enhanced cooperation among nations. We call for strengthened international cooperation on vaccine research and development, production and distribution, and improving accessibility and affordability. In this regard, vaccines must be distributed rapidly, fairly and equitably, as well as universally. No one will be safe from COVID 19 until everyone is safe. Innovative measures, such as voluntary licensing and exchange of know-how and technology must be taken to enhance equitable access to affordable vaccines and to scale up global vaccine production and distribution in the long term. We commend the collaboration among countries, along with health organizations and manufacturers, including through the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator and the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) programme. However, much remains to be done to ensure unimpeded and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines for all countries.
9. We urge collaboration on continued research and innovation into the treatment and elimination of COVID-19 and coronaviruses more generally, including the debilitating long-term impacts of post-COVID-19 syndrome (also known as "long COVID"). Moreover, we call for close co-operation to prepare the world for future pandemics. In this regard, it is important to work towards the establishment of a global health charter, to be agreed upon by world leaders, which guarantees health security for the world's population, without exception, and to confront epidemics and disasters of a global nature with common universal principles and values, and in a manner that guarantees respect for human health rights.
10. The recovery of the global economy following the COVID-19 pandemic remains uncertain and unequal. Many countries will face huge budgetary deficits in the coming years and parliaments must be ready to address such challenges. We believe that a fair, open, inclusive, transparent and non-discriminatory rules-based multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core, remains a pivotal foundation for the global economy. We call for increased coordination on macro-economic policy, continued efforts to strengthen sustainable global trade and oppose protectionism and unilateralism, and robust measures to revitalize the global economy – including in terms of developing a fairer global tax system. A key component of the economic recovery will be the advancement of the digital economy. We, therefore, call for more efforts to address the digital gap and ensure fair access to technology, internet connectivity and knowledge. Parliaments should help facilitate the development of core digital infrastructure and enhance digital skills among their populations.
11. The COVID-19 pandemic must not overshadow the urgency of climate action. In order to genuinely build a better future and long-term resilience, we must achieve a green, inclusive and innovation-based growth and sustainable recovery. We remain convinced of the compelling need to tackle climate change and reiterate the critical importance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the actions and targets set out in the Paris Agreement. We welcome increased support for the Paris Agreement, in particular the return of the United States earlier this year as a party state to the Agreement. We express our strong support for an ambitious and collaborative outcome from the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021, and stand ready to make a robust parliamentary contribution to this process.
12. We also express our deep concern about the negative impacts of the climate crisis on human health and security, such as increased food insecurity, water stress and resource scarcity arising from increasingly frequent and ever more severe weather events, all of which in turn fuel conflicts and tensions and force more people around the world to leave their homes. We stress the need for preventive strategies to mitigate climate risks and enhance resilience, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized people. We recognize the importance of preserving biodiversity and express our support for COP15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity, due to be held in Kunming, China in October 2021, under the theme of *Ecological Civilization – Building a Shared Future for all Life on Earth*.
13. The COVID-19 pandemic has also resulted in increasing threats to our democratic principles and institutions. In addressing the pandemic, the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government have had to take challenging

decisions, notably curtailing freedom of movement, which has sometimes led to disillusionment and citizens losing trust in the political processes and in their representatives. Left unchecked, this dissonance, which is often fed by misinformation and extremist ideology, can create serious security threats to our institutions and to the physical safety of our legislators and staff. Governments should take people-centred measures, in full respect of human rights, in order to restore public trust that was eroded during the pandemic. Parliaments should serve as the centre of democratic accountability and transparency, including for COVID-19 responses, by systematically integrating public engagement into their work. This will enhance their legitimacy and the quality of parliamentary processes.

14. Parliaments have remained open for business despite restrictions on their ability to meet in person. This has led to unprecedented innovation, bringing information and communications technologies (ICT) from the back office into the very heart of parliamentary chambers, allowing remote working, remote sittings and even remote voting in many countries. We encourage parliaments to continue to innovate and expand the use of digital technologies in order to be appropriately prepared for future emergencies, enhance access to parliaments, and ultimately increase their accountability, transparency and openness to the public.
15. While information and communications technologies have allowed the world to remain as interconnected as possible, and have contributed to enhancing prosperity, development and security at all levels, our increased use of technology carries considerable risks, exposing us to cyber-attacks and cybercrime. The internet, and in particular social media, is fertile ground for misinformation, manipulation and the dissemination of false news and disinformation, discrimination, harassment, hate speech and violence. Increased mass surveillance, undue dependence on and unregulated use of algorithms and artificial intelligence, and digital privacy are also pressing concerns.
16. All stakeholders need to observe principles, rules and norms for responsible behaviour in the ICT environment. We call on the global community to come together and establish a multilateral framework for regulating the use of digital technologies and imposing greater accountability on big tech corporations. More generally, we must work for a global consensual approach to the management of these challenges, including data security and privacy, the consequences of the use of artificial intelligence, and the ethical aspect of scientific and technological innovation, in strict compliance with our human rights obligations.
17. We strongly believe that a global community with a shared future for humankind has interwoven mutual interests and aspirations. Common challenges can only be overcome

through global responses, coordination and collaboration between all our nations. We, therefore, reaffirm the key role of multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core. We also firmly support the IPU's efforts to engage and mobilize parliaments and parliamentarians around major international global processes and global commitments, thereby further strengthening the parliamentary dimension of global governance. We must continue to review, revitalize and renew multilateralism, so as to ensure that the voices of parliamentarians are heard at the United Nations and other international fora.

18. We commend the Austrian Parliament and the IPU, our global organization of national parliaments, for bringing us together for this parliamentary summit at such a historic time. We pledge to take this Declaration back to our countries and our parliaments, and to work diligently in following up on its key recommendations. We look forward to coming together again under the auspices of the IPU and in cooperation with the United Nations so as to share our experiences and report back on progress achieved.

Reservations expressed:

To paragraph 4 (gender equality) and paragraph 12 (climate change): by Turkey

To the concepts of "*people-centered measures*" (paragraph 13) and "*global community with a shared future for humankind*" (paragraph 17): by Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland

13th Summit of Women Speakers

On 6 September 2021, the world's top women legislators gathered in Vienna for the 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament (13SWSP) hosted by the Inter Parliamentary Union, the Parliament of Austria and the United Nations. The Summit was held on the occasion of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (5WCSP). Twenty-eight women Speakers of Parliament attended what was the first global in-person gathering for many of the participants in nearly two years.

The theme of the Summit was *Women at the centre: From confronting the pandemic to preserving achievements in a gender-responsive recovery*. The Speakers of Parliament discussed the essential role of women during the pandemic, as well as how the post-pandemic recovery could lead to progress in gender equality.

The economic downturn brought about by the pandemic had added to existing inequalities in many ways. Women typically earn less and have less secure jobs than men. With plummeting economic activity, women are particularly vulnerable to layoffs and loss of livelihood. During the first month of the pandemic, informal workers worldwide lost an average of 60 per cent of their income. Some of the sectors hardest hit by the pandemic were feminized sectors, such as the retail, beauty and hospitality industries. Women also have less access to land and capital, which makes it harder for them to bounce back and rebuild their businesses.

Women lead on the front lines of the pandemic response. They make up 70 per cent of the global health and social care workforce. They are more likely to be frontline health professionals, especially nurses, midwives and community health workers. These professionals are sacrificing their health for the safety of society.

Furthermore, the pandemic has increased care and domestic work which disproportionally falls on women. Women do 2.6 times more care and domestic work than men. Most of this work is unpaid, which means that even if women's domestic care workload is increasing their gainful employment is not.

The Summit discussed these pressing developments while acknowledging women's role in the pandemic response and charting the way forward in strengthening gender equality through COVID-19 recovery efforts.

The Summit was divided into two main sessions. The first session *Women in the pandemic: A tribute to everyday heroes* featured interactive debates anchored on women in the health care sector, women's unpaid care work, and women's lack of

access to social protection. The women Speakers agreed that while women composed the majority of the health care sector workforce and worked on the frontline, they were more likely than men to be in lower paid jobs and be less represented in health care leadership positions. There is therefore an urgent need to encourage and support women to be represented in all public and private spheres of leadership.

Moreover, the Speakers discussed the need to value and redistribute unpaid domestic care work that burdened many households. While it is important to financially support and compensate domestic care work, there is also a need for strong incentives to have women in the workforce. The Speakers agreed that domestic care work must not be seen as a woman's job only but as work that should be equally shared between men and women.

The Speakers also discussed the need for universal and gender-responsive social protection schemes. Many of the participants argued that there was no bigger discrimination than exclusion from pension schemes and social security. Today, 60 per cent of women worldwide are not covered by any type of social protection. Social protection is an integral part of the discussion on economic growth and gender equality which is why social protection policies must be amended to equally benefit men and women.

The second session *Women in the post-pandemic recovery: Preserving achievements, furthering progress* featured interactive debates on a COVID 19 recovery agenda with focus on achieving gender parity, advancing women's economic empowerment, and eradicating gender-based violence.

Gender parity in parliaments is a crucial step in advancing gender transformative societies post-pandemic. There must be more voices in parliament that reflect the everyday situation of women and girls in order to achieve inclusive policies that will respond to the derailment of gender equality in the pandemic as a result of, for example, the lack of economic protection of working women or the increase of gender-based violence.

The participants acknowledged that there could be no equality in the workplace if there was no equality in the home. The gender pay gap is a sum of different factors, one of which is the cultural expectations of caregiving. Even in situations where women and men both work full time, it is the woman who is more likely to spend more time on childcare or household activities. This affects a woman's likelihood of getting promoted and from there the woman's and man's earning potential diverges. Policies must therefore be put in place to incentivize both women and men to share the burden through, for example, paid parental leave and child support.

As daunting challenges related to violence against women and children arise in the COVID-19 pandemic, Speakers must strengthen their efforts to eradicate such violence. The Speakers agreed that without drastic cultural and economic change, women would continue to suffer. Violence against women and children is firmly rooted in political and social factors, which is why policies must address its root causes, among others by empowering girls and ensuring they have equal access to education.

The women parliamentary leaders agreed that a transformation of the economy and society through a feminist lens was needed. The COVID-19 crisis provided an opportunity for that kind of transformation and gave a clear message on what must be changed. It is the duty of parliamentarians to lead the feminist transformation of our global system, to ensure the just allocation of resources and equal opportunities. The outcome of the 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament confirmed that women Speakers were eager to lead the way.

Opening address

Mr. Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Vienna, 7 September 2021

Excellencies, Speakers of parliament,

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the beautiful and historic city of Vienna and to officially open the in-person segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. I would like to thank our hosts, the Austrian Parliament, for the energy and passion they have invested in the organization of this unique Conference.

This is the first time we have met in person as a global parliamentary community in nearly two years. Despite huge scientific advances in the development of treatments and vaccines, the pandemic is not yet over, with over 4 million confirmed deaths having resulted from COVID-19. Aside from the economic losses, our hard-won progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals has been undermined and many governments have used the pandemic as a pretext to roll back human rights and weaken democracy.

In some regions, the unresolved challenges of the past have continued to fester or have even erupted with a vengeance, in the form of attacks on democratically elected parliaments in several countries.

Earlier this year, a military coup in Myanmar wiped out years of hard work in establishing effective and representative institutions in the country. We have expressed our solidarity with the parliament and people of Myanmar and stand ready to support the return to constitutional order in the country. During the Conference, we will be hearing from the President of the Committee to Represent the Union Assembly of Myanmar. I ask you to continue to support him and his colleagues in their efforts to represent the interests of the people of Myanmar.

In Venezuela, the political crisis has reached new heights. Just over a week ago, the IPU undertook a long overdue mission to Venezuela. We held frank discussions with the representatives of the various political factions in the country, in an effort to get a better understanding of the situation on the ground and to mobilize action by all concerned to overcome the crisis. We hope that the outcome of the Mexico Talks will be reflected in a sound framework for dialogue, which can lead to progress in meeting the real needs of the Venezuelan people.

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed the tragic events unfolding in Afghanistan, a country where for over twenty years the IPU has tried to assist a fledgling parliament in its efforts to build capacity to exercise its constitutional role. As we speak, MPs, parliamentary staff, members of civil society and women leaders are in grave danger. We urge you all to call on those in power and authority in Afghanistan to protect the lives and physical integrity of parliamentarians and their staff, facilitating assistance to those who are subject to or fear reprisals – including by helping their urgent evacuation from the country and supporting the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need.

On Sunday, yet another military coup took place, this time in Guinea. We strongly condemn the dissolution of the National Assembly and the use of force to change the constitutional order.

The IPU is particularly concerned with the situation of parliamentarians in Guinea. We call for their human rights to be respected as well as the integrity of the institution of parliament. We call for the swift return to constitutional rule and urge all sides to find peaceful and sustainable solutions through the rule of law, dialogue and mediation. The IPU stands by to help Guinea to develop a strong, effective and representative parliament that delivers for all the people.

Beyond the attacks of parliament, we are witnessing a growing and very worrying threat of terrorism and violent extremism, as evidenced by the recent terrorist attacks in various countries and regions, be they the Sahel, the Middle East, or countries such as Mozambique.

In this context, our meetings in Vienna this week have taken on crucial importance. The current state of the world calls for leadership, solidarity and transformative action. This is our opportunity to come together to examine and re-energize multilateralism in order to safeguard peace, rebuild a weakened global socio-economic climate, protect democratic principles and strengthen respect for universal human rights.

Dear colleagues,

18 months into the pandemic, although the economic recovery is picking up, it is uncertain and uneven. The gap between developed and developing economies has been increasing. The crisis has revealed and worsened already high levels of inequalities within and between countries. One of the growing inequalities is the global gender gap. The impacts of crises are

never gender neutral, and the COVID-19 crisis is no exception. The effects of lockdowns and economic downturns are more gravely felt by women and girls. Decades of gains in gender equality risk being reversed. In addition, around 100 million people are at risk of falling back into extreme poverty by the end of the year.

A clear strategy is needed to energize the economic recovery, address some of the long-term effects of the pandemic and work towards a faster eradication of COVID-19, through fair and widespread access to vaccines and robust health systems.

Beyond the pandemic, we must address the climate emergency. Extreme weather events – such as increasingly virulent heatwaves, fires and storms on all continents – constitute dire warnings about the health of our planet. The recently released IPCC report on climate change is a code red for humanity. Greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning and deforestation are choking our planet and putting billions of people at immediate risk from irreversible global heating. The time to act is now, and we need to be part of the solution.

The pandemic has tested the resilience of parliaments, but they must remain at the centre of efforts to nurture democratic, inclusive, prosperous and resilient societies that are able to withstand the shocks of our changing world.

As part of these efforts, we need to step up action towards the empowerment of women. The plight of women and girls needs to be high on our agenda. Decades of progress in women's rights and empowerment, women's central role in democracy but also girls' education risk being unravelled without our strong leadership to protect women and girls from all forms of discrimination and violence. Later today, we will be discussing the need for a new global social compact for gender equality. We are counting on you to pursue robust action in your parliaments to make such a compact a reality.

Equally, we are convinced of the need to enhance youth participation in politics, hence rejuvenating democracy and its institutions. We must deliver on young people's expectations to inherit a better world. Earlier this year, the IPU launched its "I Say Yes to Youth" in Parliament campaign. As leaders in our parliaments and political parties, we are encouraged to join the IPU in promoting this campaign and bringing about positive change.

Last but not least, I would like to welcome the incoming President of the UN General Assembly, Mr. Abdulla Shahid of the Maldives, himself a former Speaker of Parliament, and the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly. The first Speakers' Conference took place 20 years ago on the occasion of the UN Millennium

Summit, during which Heads of State and Government acknowledged the need for systematic cooperation between the UN system and national parliaments, through the IPU as their world organization.

We count on you, President Shahid and Madam Director-General Waly, to continue to take that relationship forward, with a view to bringing the voice of parliamentarians to global processes and helping to transform international commitments into national realities. Multilateralism and global governance need to be reformed and strengthened, so as to effectively deliver on the needs and expectations of people everywhere. We stand ready to join you in this process.

Dear Colleagues,

A better, more peaceful and prosperous world calls for parliamentary solidarity and effective cooperation at all levels – national, regional and international.

As Speakers of Parliament, you have a key role in your countries in bringing to life a vision for eradicating the current pandemic, addressing the major challenges of our time and anchoring us on the path towards a better future. Our Conference this week must embody our determination to embrace positive and transformative change.

I encourage the parliamentary leaders in this hall to answer the call of a troubled world, through ideas, visions, pledges to action and, ultimately, the adoption of our common high-level Declaration.

Thank you.

Mr. Peter Raggl, President of the Austrian Federal Council

Vienna, 7 September 2021

Speakers of Parliament,
President Pacheco,
President-Elect of the UN General Assembly Mr. Shahid,
Madam Chair of the Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament
Ms. Trøen,
Secretary General Chungong,
Dear Ms. Fawzia Koofi,
Dear Ms. Bosek,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As President of the Austrian Federal Council, the upper house of the Austrian Parliament, it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the second part of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament here in Vienna. Our federal capital Vienna is currently showing off its most beautiful side. I think that the federal capital has actually done this for the Speakers of Parliament, to honour you and to welcome you here in Vienna.

A challenging time, a time that was characterized by the Coronavirus pandemic, is hopefully behind us. A time in which social contact at all levels, from the familial to the global, was subject to drastic restrictions. These restrictions have greatly disrupted our social and political lives, and perhaps also changed them entirely. Even if technical advancements have enabled us to stay in contact during the pandemic, as the Secretary General already touched upon, virtual meetings are no adequate substitute for meeting face-to-face. This applies at a regional as well as an international level, at a personal as well as a political level.

So it is all the more important to resume multilateral relationships to their full extent in person once again for the benefit of our regions, our countries, our populations and in the interest of peace and sustainable development. In doing so, we must think of the local and the global together. It is not only the COVID-19 pandemic that has shown us how global problems also require answers at a local level. The strong local dimension in the crisis management of the pandemic is just one example of that. Also with a view to the climate and sustainable development, we need to include the regions; indeed all rural areas must be included, even if problems there are not solved alone.

In Austria, for example, the participation of the Federal Council, of which I currently have the privilege of being President, in matters concerning the EU has a special significance. It brings regional points of reference into the decision-making process on a European level and has therefore taken on the task of

acting as the hinge for the Austrian federal states for initiatives towards the European Union. For this reason, the Federal Council is also known as the European Chamber in Austria.

I therefore warmly welcome and am really very pleased to see numerous representatives of federal chambers here today. This is an important signal for how the regional dimension also assumes its responsibilities within the framework of parliamentary diplomacy. Only with an inclusive inter-parliamentary dialogue can we tackle the global challenges of our time. I am therefore proud that the Austrian Parliament, together with the IPU and the United Nations, has the honour of providing the platform for this meeting here today.

I would once again like to welcome you here to Austria, to our federal capital of Vienna. I look forward to our exchange of ideas over the next few days and thank you for accepting our invitation. Thank you.

Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the Austrian National Council

Vienna, 7 September 2021

Speakers of Parliament,
Dear Colleagues,
President of the IPU Mr. Pacheco,
Madam Chair of the Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament,
which we were able to observe in the entirety of its broad
discussions throughout the day yesterday,
President-Elect of the UN General Assembly Mr. Shahid, it is a
pleasure to have you with us here today,
Secretary General Martin Chungong,
Director-General Waly of the UN Office here in Austria,
Esteemed Ms. Koofi,
Esteemed Ms. Bosek,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a very special honour for me, as the President of the Austrian National Council, to be able to welcome you here in Vienna today. Austria has functioned as a builder of bridges many times in its history. You need only think of the first encounter between Kennedy and Khrushchev here in Vienna, a meeting which sought to end the Cold War.

For over forty years, we have hosted the United Nations, and many organizations of international importance have found their home here. Austria is and wants to be a predestined location of international diplomacy and dialogue in the heart of Europe. I am therefore particularly pleased that Austria is able to fulfil this role at the inter-parliamentary level this year.

This Conference represents the first high-level parliamentary gathering after experiencing a social, economic and political life that was severely restricted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. Personal contact and the direct exchange of ideas are indispensable for the development of mutual trust and understanding. Without them, politics can neither take place nor function at a national nor an international level. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, we recognized that when faced with a global problem, the international community can work together successfully on global solutions, as was impressively demonstrated in the vaccine development process.

This gives us hope for other global challenges, of which there are enough. We will raise and discuss some of them today and tomorrow in the panels as well as the general debate. The first part of the Conference, which took place virtually in August last year, provided impressive proof that technical advancements and digitalization have opened up new perspectives to us. However, parliamentarianism is inseparable from face-to-face gatherings such as this one, from public discussions and from the informal exchange of dialogue.

I am very grateful that, despite facing great challenges, you have found your way from all over the world to us here in Austria, in Vienna. I am convinced that parliaments can make an essential contribution to a more effective multilateralism for the service of all people, for peace, stability and sustainable development. As parliamentarians, we are entrusted with the responsibility for making the voices of our voters clearly heard, including on the international stage.

The importance of a parliamentary dimension within international relations has lost nothing of its meaning over the 21-year existence of this Conference. A look at our programme over the next two days will show which questions, among many others, need to be answered. The socio-economic effects of the pandemic threaten the livelihoods of millions of people. They have relegated the worldwide implementation of the sustainable development goals into – I hope only temporarily – taking a back seat. The global efforts towards gender equality as well as the fight against climate change were neglected.

Having to weigh up the fundamental rights of the individual versus collective health severely tested the trust of our citizens in some places. Many countries experienced severe protests during the pandemic, which were often also aimed directly against our parliaments. It is therefore necessary to restore trust in our institutions in those places where it has suffered damage. I consider the questions of how we are to alleviate the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on our parliaments and how we can best guarantee the balance of openness and security of our parliaments, as well as our parliamentarians, in a climate of societal polarization, to be quite central. Our goal must be to find concrete paths towards the democratic renewal, resilience and audibility of our parliaments.

Franz Kafka, a significant German-language writer, once said, "Paths are made by walking." Let us therefore walk the path towards the audibility of our parliaments together.

Esteemed Speakers of Parliament, we are all aware that international problems require international solutions. But not everyone is aware that parliaments take on a significant responsibility in doing so. The bilateral and multilateral parliamentary diplomacy required for this is based on the respect we show one another. But it also requires a public space, as is the case today. The fact that we are coming together in Vienna this week is a strong sign for me that parliamentarians are searching for answers to the pressing global questions at an international level.

I wish you and all of us a constructive debate as well as a pleasant stay in Austria and I look forward to welcoming you at the reception of the Austrian Parliament at the Vienna Hofburg this evening.

Address

Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly at the Opening of the 5th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

Vienna, 7 September 2021

H.E. Mr. Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU),
H.E. Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka, President of the National Council of the Republic of Austria,
H.E. Mr. Peter Raggl, President of the Federal Council of the Republic of Austria,
Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to join you for the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Government of Austria for convening this Conference. I would also like to commend the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Secretary-General Martin Chungong for their unwavering support to democracy and multilateralism.

Colleagues, I have the honour of having had a lengthy relationship with the IPU during my five terms in the Maldivian Parliament, and the pleasure of calling Mr. Chungong a friend. It was former IPU Secretary-General Anders B. Johnsson, along with Mr. Chungong, who supported the Maldives during our transition to democracy.

As Speaker of Parliament of the Maldives, I relied upon their support during some of our most challenging periods. I have deep respect and appreciation for the IPU and its team. Martin, my friend, I thank you and it is a pleasure to be here with you today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I stand before you today not as a speaker of parliament but as the President-elect of the UN General Assembly, the 'Parliament of Humanity'.

As I take on this role, I have no doubt that the lessons that I have learned as Speaker of Parliament and as a Parliamentarian will serve me well. Much like your own parliaments, the UN and multilateralism thrives on dialogue, on negotiation, and on nuance.

These elements are needed now more than ever.

Our world continues the slow but steady emergence from the global pandemic.

We however struggle to bring climate change under control.

There is growing inequality which has only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

While vaccines are available the distribution has been uneven.

The lockdowns in many countries have seen falls in revenues, job losses, school closures, rises in mental health and domestic violence cases, and proliferation of fake news.

The pandemic has also not given respite to the security situation in fragile states.

Clearly, there are many reasons to be cynical or pessimistic about the challenges around us. But that is an option we cannot afford.

Billions of people look to us for signs of hope, for indications that there exists a better future. They yearn for a world that is greener, bluer, more resilient, free of conflict and hostilities, and more equal and just for all.

They look to us for hope. I say, let us give it to them.

For every challenge that we face there are solutions. The obstacle, therefore, is not the lack of solutions but our own capacity and will to do what is needed, to pursue a multilateral approach.

Let me be clear: we have only one viable path forward and that is a multilateral one.

Whether discussing COVID-19, climate change, or economic recovery, we can only go forward together. Our world is too interconnected not to address our challenges – or seize our opportunities – as one. We must learn to embrace multilateralism.

It is this need for togetherness and unity that has led me to choose 'hope' as the theme of the 76th session. We must give people hope for a better future. This is also the reason why my Presidency is the "Presidency of Hope".

Ladies and gentlemen, the 76th session will prioritize five rays of hope.

First, our immediate priority will be continuing the recovery from COVID-19. Ensuring equitable access for vaccines is unparalleled in importance. Without this, we prolong the pandemic, threaten lives and livelihoods, and risk only further variants and outbreaks. It is for this reason that I plan to organize a 'High-Level Meeting on Vaccines' at the General Assembly before the end of the year or early next year.

Second, we need to build back better, stronger, bluer, and greener. I will use the 76th session to emphasize the need for a sustainable, transformative recovery from COVID-19. This pandemic has been a setback to the lives of billions, yet our recovery to this setback can be a turning point, allowing us to move faster and further. Let us embrace this opportunity for change and ignite progress on the "Decade of Action on the Sustainable Development Goals."

Third, we must respond to the needs of the planet. The recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was unequivocal in its assessment of where we are on this issue. We must act quickly if we are to limit the climate impacts. For my part, I will convene a 'High-Level Meeting on Climate' in October 2021. It is my hope that this effort will help inspire greater climate ambition from Member States ahead of COP26 in Glasgow.

Relatedly, we will have other significant events in the coming year on the environment, covering the ocean; desertification, land degradation and drought; and biodiversity. We must use each of these moments to push for ever more action. To fully utilize the impetus generated by these events, it is my intention to hold a 'super session on nature' during the 76th session of the UNGA. My hope is that this super session will galvanize the required political momentum to advance global climate goals.

Fourth, we must continue to promote and protect human rights, and address inequalities and injustices. The protection of human rights is one of the core values of the United Nations. We need to work together to counter the rising tide of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination.

As a life-long supporter of gender equality, I will focus on the empowerment of women, ensuring their full, equal, and meaningful representation. My cabinet is gender balanced and I have been vocal about my intention to only participate in panels or discussions that reflect gender parity. I hope you will join me in espousing these principles.

And finally, we need to continue our efforts to empower and reform the United Nations. Building on the work of my predecessors, I will continue to make the United Nations more efficient, effective, accountable and even family friendly. I will work with Member States to ensure that our decisions, discussions, and actions are relevant and impactful to the people of the world. We need to bring the United Nations closer to the people.

Ladies and gentlemen, parliaments are necessary partners for each of these rays of hope. Whether it is in ensuring access to vaccines, recovering sustainably from the pandemic, or tackling the threat of climate change, the UN cannot act alone, we need to work with our partners in parliament.

Parliaments represent the voice of the people. Parliaments help ensure that resolutions and decisions in the General Assembly are passed onto the national and local stage and translated into concrete deliverables that people can see and feel. This is how we bring together the work of the UN to people everywhere.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have had a challenging period to say the least. We must look forward together. We must shape our joint future together. I look forward to working with you to making this a reality.

Let the Parliaments of the world unite in our joint endeavour for a better future.

I thank you again for the opportunity to speak.

Opening address (video)

Mr. Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General at the opening of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

6 September, 2021, Vienna

As a former parliamentarian, it's a privilege to take part in this Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and Summit of Women Speakers.

Parliaments connect people to power.

Without this connection, governing is untenable —

Democracy unthinkable —

And for a world reeling from COVID-19, climate change, inequality and conflicts, recovery is impossible.

The common solution to all of these challenges is solidarity.

People acting in the common interest.

That's what the multilateral system does on the global stage.

And it's what parliaments seek to do at the national level.

Parliaments bridge the global and local.

You ratify treaties, execute international commitments, and ensure critical support through national budgets.

You are central to advancing human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We're counting on you to secure ambitious climate action.

The recent IPCC report is a reminder that there is no time for delay and no room for excuses.

The solutions are clear.

A commitment to net-zero emissions by mid-century.

More ambitious 2030 climate plans.

No new coal plants after 2021.

Phasing out fossil fuel subsidies.

And delivering credible adaptation support to developing countries backed by adequate climate finance.

That is the pathway to inclusive and green economies, prosperity, cleaner air and better health.

We also support your efforts to put people first.

With stronger social protections and safety nets.

Universal health coverage and basic income.

Education for all.

And increased support for girls and women, who have suffered disproportionately from the pandemic.

They face increased violence — online, in the streets and at home.

They're at heightened risk of child marriage and early pregnancy.

And with job losses and increased poverty, we risk losing a generation's worth of hard-won gains for women.

We need to put women at the centre of the recovery.

And at the centre of parliaments.

Only three countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament.

Many have no women at all.

We urge countries and political parties to achieve true gender parity in the halls of power — including through gender quotas.

When women are equally represented — when women lead — we see greater outcomes for everyone.

And we build greater trust in the institutions upon which we all rely.

Parliaments must reflect the will of the people.

All people.

And support their needs as they struggle through this perilous moment in history.

The United Nations stands with parliamentarians everywhere in this great effort.

Thank you.

President of the IPU

Mr. Duarte Pacheco

Secretary General of the IPU

Mr. Martin Chungong

Speaker of the Host Parliament

Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka

President of the UN General Assembly

Mr. Abdulla Shahid

Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna

Ms. Ghada Fathi Waly

Preparatory committee

President

Mr. Duarte Pacheco

President of the IPU, Portugal

Members

| | | |
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| Mr. Brahim Boughali | President | National People's Assembly, Algeria |
| Ms. Fawzia Zainal | Speaker | Council of Representatives, Bahrain |
| Ms. Stephanie D'Hose | President | Senate, Belgium |
| Mr. Haroun Kabadi | President | National Assembly, Chad |
| Ms. Guadalupe Llori Abarca | President | National Assembly, Ecuador |
| Mr. Manzoor Nadir | Speaker | National Assembly, Guyana |
| Mr. Steingrímur J. Sigfússon | Speaker | Althingi, Iceland |
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| Lord Fakafanua | Speaker | Legislative Assembly, Tonga |
| Ms. Beatriz Argimón | President | General Assembly and Senate, Uruguay |

Member representatives

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Ms. Claudia Roth | Vice-President of the German Bundestag (representing |
| Mr. Wolfgang Schäuble | President of the German Bundestag) |
| Mr. Chen Guomin | Vice-Chairman NPC Foreign Affairs Committee (representing |
| Mr. Li Zhanshu | Chairman of Standing Committee of NPC, China) |
| Mr. Reinhold Lopatka | Chair of the IPU Advisory Group on Combating Terrorism and Violent Extremism (representing |
| Mr. Wolfgang Sobotka | President of the Nationalrat, Austria) |

Members of the Executive Committee

Mr. Juan Pablo Letelier, Chile
 Ms. Pikulkeaw Krairiksh, Thailand
 Speaker Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda, Zimbabwe

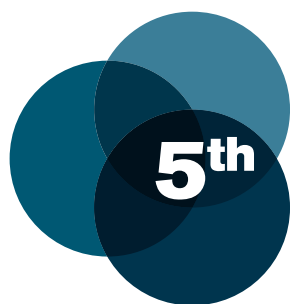
Ex-officio members

| | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|--|
| Ms. Lesia Vasylenko, Ukraine | President | Bureau of Women Parliamentarians |
| Ms. Sahar Albazar, Egypt | President | Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians |

Representative of the UN Secretary-General

Ms. Tatiana Valovaya Director-General, United Nations Office at Geneva

Mr. Martin Chungong IPU Secretary General



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