



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

148th IPU Assembly

Geneva, 23–27 March 2024

Panel discussion on interfaith dialogue: *Building bridges through interfaith dialogue for more peaceful and inclusive societies*

Monday, 25 March 2024, 14:00–16:00

Concept note

In recent years, the global parliamentary community has observed, with concern, the increasingly fractured state of the world and its growing inequalities, injustices and divisions.

This global fragmentation poses a very real threat to the principles underlying the equal dignity and rights of all people and their capacity to coexist peacefully. Barriers between people are increasing, fuelled by divisive voices, endangering the fragile social contract which binds together our human family.

At the 146th IPU Assembly in Manama in March 2023, parliamentarians responded to the climate of distrust by committing to promote dialogue, moderation, education and awareness-building; to speak out against intolerance and hate speech; and to work towards the common good. They invited religious and community leaders, as influential figures in society, to be part of this process.

Parliamentarians and representatives of religions, beliefs, faith-based organizations and other experts from around the world subsequently gathered together in Marrakesh in June 2023 for the first-ever Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue: *Working together for our common future*. Over three days, participants shared best practices and challenges in their work to promote sustainable peace, democracy, good governance and inclusive societies, and explored avenues for cooperation.

In Marrakesh, parliamentarians and religious and belief actors interacted with one another as *allies* – each with a separate mandate – in their common pursuit of social justice and peaceful coexistence. Parliamentarians affirmed that “interfaith dialogue that is grounded in support of fundamental rights and freedoms is an essential tool for promoting inclusivity and peaceful coexistence, upholding the rule of law and encouraging collective efforts to achieve a better society.” The IPU has embraced interfaith dialogue as a tool for building peaceful societies, consistent with its founding vision. This was reflected in the decision made by the Governing Council at the 147th IPU Assembly in Luanda in October 2023 to pursue work in this area.

Throughout 2023, the United Nations also adopted a number of resolutions promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue as a tool to counter intolerance, discrimination and religious hatred – including antisemitism and Islamophobia.¹

And yet, almost a year after the Marrakesh Conference, the world is even more fractured, divided and unjust than before. The need for collective action for the common good is urgent.

This panel discussion on Interfaith Dialogue proposes to build on the key outcomes of the Marrakesh Conference and examine the achievements and ongoing challenges in parliamentary efforts to promote interfaith dialogue, particularly in light of the fundamental task of parliaments to uphold the rule of law and promote human rights for all, without distinction.

¹ See: [S/RES/2686\(2023\)](#); [A/HRC/53/L.23](#); [UN Doc A/77/L.89](#)

The panel discussion will also look towards 2025, a Jubilee year announced by Pope Francis under the theme “Pilgrims of Hope”, when a second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue will take place in Rome. Key takeaways from the Session will also be reflected in the second part of the IPU publication *Parliamentary report on religion and belief*, currently in preparation.

The panel discussion will explore the following questions:

- What good parliamentary practices for promoting peaceful and inclusive societies have emerged since the Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue in Marrakesh in 2023?
- What are the ongoing challenges related to religion or belief that parliaments or parliamentarians face in their work to promote peace and inclusion on the basis of human rights for all and the rule of law?
- What can parliaments or parliamentarians do to deescalate tensions rooted in religion or belief between people or communities and promote peace and inclusion?
- What contribution can parliaments or parliamentarians make to ensure that the rule of law is upheld and that the human rights of all are protected in religiously diverse societies?