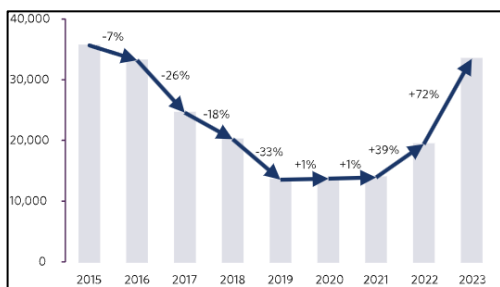


Conference report

Parliamentary diplomacy to foster peace and security

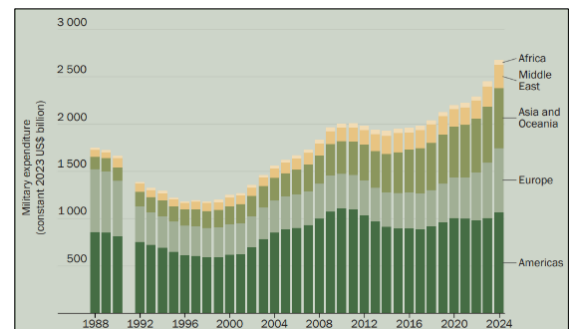
The world is facing an unprecedented escalation in violence and instability, with [global conflicts having doubled between 2019 and 2024](#). In 2024 alone, more than 233,000 people were killed in conflict-related violence – a 30% increase on the previous year – and almost 200,000 incidents of political violence were recorded – the highest since systematic monitoring began. As of the end of 2024, there were [120 armed conflicts, both new and persistent, raging around the world](#). The nature of violence is also shifting: conflict is increasingly urbanized and frequent, with bombings and remote attacks now representing nearly half of all incidents. Beyond the tragic loss of life and destruction of livelihoods, these worrying trends are direct drivers of deeper poverty, increased inequality and greater suffering among marginalized groups.



Number of civilian conflict-related deaths and percentage change from previous year, 2015–2023
 Source: [United Nations Statistics Division](#)

The human cost of conflict and violence is staggering. As of mid-2024, more than 122 million people were forcibly displaced – the highest number ever recorded. Among them, [43.7 million were refugees](#) and over half were children. Violence is no longer geographically contained: in 2024, one in every eight people worldwide lived within 5 km of an active conflict zone. Palestine, Myanmar and the Syrian Arab Republic top the global conflict index, with 81% of the population in the Palestinian territories living under daily threat of violence.

Despite these alarming realities, [global military expenditure rose to a record US\\$ 2.72 trillion in 2024](#) – a 9.4% increase on the previous year and the highest annual rise since the Cold War. Yet this escalation in arms has failed to reverse the global trend: conflicts proliferate, ceasefires are rare and international norms are being eroded.



World military expenditure, by region, 1988–2024
 Source: [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute](#)

Recognizing the limits of force, the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General's 2023 [New Agenda for Peace](#), which builds on the 2016 [Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace Agenda](#), calls for a shift towards inclusive, people-centred peacebuilding rooted in human rights, sustainable development and preventive diplomacy. The 2024 [Pact for the Future](#) further outlines global commitments to revitalize multilateralism and tackle systemic risks, with Actions 13–27 outlining specific commitments on international peace and security.

Parliaments are central to this transformation. As the institutions mandated to adopt legislation, approve national budgets, ratify treaties and oversee government action, parliaments are in a position to ensure that peace and security efforts are inclusive, accountable and sustainable. They are also spaces for dialogue and reconciliation, capable of addressing grievances before they escalate into violence. Now more than ever, parliaments must leverage their constitutional powers to break cycles of violence and foster lasting peace.

Catalysing parliamentary action for peace and security

Article 1 of the [Statutes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union](#) (IPU) states that the Organization's core mission, since its inception, has been to promote "worldwide parliamentary dialogue" and to "work for peace and cooperation among peoples". This approach is based on the recognition that peace, democratic governance, human well-being and development – all areas in which parliamentarians have a strong role to play – are closely intertwined.

Over the past decade and more, the IPU's work to promote parliamentary diplomacy for peace and security has been guided by two core principles: human security, which prioritizes the protection of individuals and communities from threats such as poverty, violence, inequality and environmental degradation; and common security, which is based on the understanding that a country's security is inseparable from that of its neighbours and the broader international community. Together, these approaches offer a people-centred, preventive, forward-looking and concrete framework for advancing peace and security. They demand that, alongside military considerations, parliaments maintain investments in policies that promote social resilience, dialogue, equity and sustainable development. Since the last World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, the IPU has published [Human security and common security to build peace](#), a concise, actionable toolkit to help parliaments integrate these approaches into their daily work.



The IPU adopts a flexible, multifaceted approach, deploying three main types of mechanisms to catalyse parliamentary diplomacy for peace and security:

- **Political:** The IPU's [Standing Committee on Peace and International Security](#) plays a central role in shaping parliamentary responses to global threats. The Committee's resolutions reflect the political position of the global parliamentary community on key issues affecting peace, security and stability, and become official IPU policy once adopted. These efforts are supported by the other [Standing Committees](#), as well as by the [Forum of Women Parliamentarians](#) and the [Forum of Young Parliamentarians](#), which ensure that gender and youth perspectives are mainstreamed throughout the Organization's work. The emergency item process enables Member Parliaments to collectively address international events requiring urgent attention.
- **Institutional:** The IPU leverages its good offices to assist in conflict prevention, mediation, peacebuilding and post-conflict scenarios through diplomatic, advocacy, cooperation and dialogue initiatives. These initiatives are led by various bodies, including the [Office of the Secretary General](#) and the [Office of the President](#), as well as specialized bodies focused on specific conflict-related issues ([humanitarian law](#), the [human rights of parliamentarians](#), [counter-terrorism](#), and [science and technology](#)) or on particular parts of the world ([Cyprus](#), the [Middle East](#) and [Ukraine](#)). Through the work of these bodies, the IPU fosters trust and encourages the normalization of relations, exemplifying how parliamentary diplomacy can innovate for peace in a turbulent world.
- **Programmatic:** The IPU supports parliaments in operationalizing relevant global commitments, good practices and IPU resolutions. Recognizing that peace entails more than the absence of armed hostilities, these initiatives address a wide range of interlinked issues, including disarmament, reconciliation and mediation, and the countering of terrorism and violent extremism. They also incorporate cross-cutting dimensions such as gender equality, youth empowerment, climate change, migration and sustainable development, ensuring that peacebuilding efforts are inclusive, people-centred, and responsive to the needs and perspectives of all segments of society.

How is the IPU advancing peace and security?

Coordinating parliamentary engagement with global disarmament efforts

The IPU promotes universal adherence to global disarmament instruments and the alignment of national policies with humanitarian principles, as a way of preventing conflict, reducing harm from weapons, and safeguarding human life and dignity. It supports parliaments in implementing international commitments by providing targeted capacity-building, awareness campaigns and practical tools.

The IPU encourages the full ratification and implementation of international conventions banning and regulating weapons of mass destruction, notably biological and chemical weapons. In February 2025, Comoros ratified the Biological Weapons Convention during a seminar hosted by the IPU. The Organization continues to promote nuclear disarmament and has contributed to the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by about a dozen countries since 2020. The IPU has also shifted towards a renewed emphasis on nuclear security, advocating for the peaceful and safe use of nuclear materials in civilian sectors such as health, agriculture and industry.

The IPU embraces humanitarian disarmament by advocating for the regulation or prohibition of weapons that disproportionately affect civilians, including small arms and light weapons, landmines, and cluster munitions, while also expressing concern over withdrawals from key humanitarian disarmament conventions. Countries such as Gabon and the Philippines have recently ratified the Arms Trade Treaty with the Organization's assistance.

To address emerging threats, the IPU raises awareness of new technologies, including autonomous weapons systems, artificial intelligence (AI), cyber operations, and the militarization of outer space, supporting the development of legislative frameworks to govern their use. The Organization also promotes greater transparency and accountability in defence spending through enhanced parliamentary oversight.

Fostering dialogue and reconciliation

Promoting dialogue, trust and peaceful coexistence lies at the heart of the IPU's peace and security efforts. By fostering reconciliation and addressing the root causes of conflict, the IPU enables parliaments to contribute meaningfully to peacebuilding and the restoration of constitutional order. Its efforts are rooted in practice and flexible in approach, offering platforms to sustain communication, mediate tensions and support inclusive, people-centred solutions.

Mechanisms such as the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus and the Task Force on the Peaceful Resolution of the War in Ukraine reflect the IPU's sustained commitment to dialogue, international law and humanitarian response. Through its Committee on Middle East Questions, the Organization continues to engage in complex regional issues. In April 2025, Member Parliaments adopted a landmark resolution calling for the advancement of a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, underscoring the value of parliamentary diplomacy in addressing highly polarized debates.



In 2024, the IPU facilitated the first-ever direct exchange between parliamentary delegations from Armenia and Azerbaijan, complementing formal peace processes and reaffirming the role of MPs in conflict resolution. Following a wave of coups d'état in West and Central Africa, the IPU pursued engagement over isolation, supporting transitional authorities by helping to re-establish legislative institutions, providing technical assistance and promoting inclusive road maps towards the restoration of peace, democracy and constitutional rule.

Interfaith dialogue has emerged as a valuable tool for peacebuilding and diplomacy. In line with the [IPU 2022–2026 Strategy](#), the Organization launched an initiative to explore the intersection of political institutions with religions and beliefs. It also encourages parliaments to engage with their broader social and cultural context. Through activities such as the [Parliamentary Conferences on Interfaith Dialogue](#), the IPU brings together MPs, religious leaders, faith-based organizations, civil society and academics to address shared concerns, promote peaceful, just and inclusive societies, strengthen the rule of law, and uphold human rights for all. The 2023 [Parliamentary report on religion and belief](#) maps how MPs engage with these issues.

Countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism

The IPU plays a key role in enhancing parliamentary action in countering terrorism and violent extremism. Through initiatives like the [IPU–UNODC Joint Programme](#), a collaborative initiative with the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, the Organization provides resources to help parliaments align domestic laws with global standards. The [Model Legislative Provisions for victims of terrorism](#) guide parliaments in creating rights-based frameworks for justice, reparations and psychosocial support.

The IPU is a key contributor to the Global Parliamentary Network on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, which fosters transparency, peer learning and cooperation. Tools include an [interactive legislative map](#) and a dedicated mobile app, which provide easy access to global laws, best practices and communication tools.



The IPU is supporting parliaments in the Sahel to enhance their role in countering terrorism and violent extremism. Focusing on security, development, education, environment and community engagement, the initiative promotes sustainable responses through capacity-building and the concept of positive peace. It fosters collaboration among parliamentarians, governments, civil society and non-governmental organizations to empower local communities and strengthen long-term stability.

The IPU is also supporting parliaments in developing a clear, balanced and universally agreed definition of terrorism, with a view to achieving legal consistency, fostering international cooperation, upholding human rights and preventing misuse. In addition, the Organization is addressing the growing nexus between AI, terrorism and transnational organized crime. It will assist parliaments in adapting their legal frameworks to balance innovation, security and human rights, while promoting strong oversight and global cooperation.

Legislating with evidence and ethics

Parliaments play a pivotal role in confronting contemporary threats to peace, which increasingly arise from complex and interconnected global challenges. These issues transcend borders, exacerbate insecurity, and require parliamentary responses that are rooted in science, ethics and international cooperation. The IPU is at the forefront of efforts to equip parliaments with the knowledge and tools needed to anticipate risks and legislate based on evidence rather than expedient politics.

The IPU helps parliaments navigate the societal and ethical implications of scientific and technological advancements, promoting regulatory foresight and ensuring that innovation aligns with democratic values, equity and human rights. The [IPU Charter on the Ethics of Science and Technology](#) is a landmark global framework that guides legislators in balancing progress with responsibility, reaffirming the principle that science must serve peace and humanity, not fuel division and conflict.

The [IPU Science for Peace Schools](#) initiative bridges the worlds of science and politics, bringing together scientists, parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to foster mutual understanding, collectively address challenges under the neutral umbrella of science, and strengthen the role of science diplomacy. These schools provide a space for cross-border collaboration and promote the depoliticization of scientific knowledge by grounding it in parliamentary practice and dialogue.

Time to act: Taking steps towards peace in an age of complexity

In a world marked by rising conflict, growing polarization and fast-moving global risks, the role of parliamentarians has never been more vital. As elected representatives, parliamentarians are not merely lawmakers: they are also peacebuilders, bridge-builders and guardians of democratic values. They are entrusted with a mandate to serve the people and a responsibility to shape societies that are just, safe and inclusive.

The IPU's work demonstrates that parliaments can foster reconciliation, regulate emerging threats, support victims of violence and rebuild trust where institutions have fractured. Every parliamentary action – whether engaging for disarmament, countering violent extremism, upholding ethical science or opening space for dialogue – has the power to shift societies towards peace.

Parliaments must place peace at the heart of their work. This means operating across party lines and beyond electoral cycles to enact laws that prevent violence and protect human rights, to ensure budgets reflect the needs of vulnerable communities, and to oversee policies that address the root causes of insecurity and prevent violence before it starts.

No country can face today's global challenges alone. Parliaments must therefore strengthen their cooperation through platforms such as the IPU to share experiences, promote multilateralism and support one another in building democratic resilience. Ultimately, fostering peace is not just a moral imperative; it is a democratic responsibility. Peace is not abstract. It is built, one decision at a time. The choices made in parliament today will determine the safety and well-being of generations to come.