

Description of panels and interactive debate

Panel 1: Women's and youth participation in parliament in a time of polarization and adversity

In recent years, political polarization has increased both within countries as well as between them, further challenging the perceived legitimacy and effectiveness of national and global governance bodies. As institutions designed to represent the diversity of populations, parliaments face the challenge of fostering inclusion of all groups, including women and youth in all their diversity. An inclusive parliament is understood as one that not only actively opens doors for all to be represented in parliament, but also for those representatives to be influential and to lead.

Polarization, coupled with politics increasingly taking place in the digital sphere, has resulted in representatives and aspirants, especially from under-represented groups, facing increased hostility and violence, both online and offline. This panel will identify the barriers, including violence (both online and offline), that need to be overcome for more inclusive parliaments. It will also address the structural changes needed within parliaments to foster a more gender-sensitive and inclusive environment that supports gender parity and diversity in parliamentary representation, with a focus on young women's participation.

Panel 2: Innovating for a peaceful future, crafting new solutions for a turbulent world

The world today faces numerous challenges that threaten peace and stability, including armed conflict, terrorism and organized crime, in addition to the challenge of the climate crisis. These issues endanger the lives and well-being of up to 2 billion people¹ and exacerbate poverty and inequality, especially for marginalized groups. The United Nations Secretary-General's 2023 *A New Agenda for Peace* calls on States to transcend competitive dynamics, adapt to today's technological and geopolitical realities, and embrace cooperation and collective action to address interconnected global challenges and achieve recognized common goals. As representatives of the people, responsible for ensuring the security and peaceful lives of their citizens, parliamentarians are well placed to follow these guidelines to address the root causes of conflict and enhance global stability.

In line with the notions of human security and common security, parliamentarians are called upon to implement a multifaceted and accountable approach that prioritizes trust-building, dialogue to defuse tensions, and inclusivity to ensure long-term security and stability. To that end, they will need to integrate climate considerations and propose peace education programmes that include mutual learning between civilizations and intercultural dialogue to eliminate barriers. They will also need to harness technology, while managing some of the risks emerging technologies may pose, and promote new forms of international cooperation. The panel discussion will aim to identify and share practical and innovative solutions in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and to promote interdisciplinary and cross-border cooperation for a more peaceful world.

¹ [UN Press Release, 26 January 2023](#)

Panel 3: Achieving the SDGs by 2030: What new opportunities for international cooperation?

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the global landscape has undergone significant changes, shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency and a growing number of conflicts. Ongoing and emerging risks, particularly climate change and the potential for new pandemics, are expected to hinder progress toward achieving the Goals. While overall progress on the SDGs has been insufficient, the accelerated action needed over the next five years could however create new opportunities for international cooperation and dialogue.

Parliaments have a vital role to play through legislation – such as adopting measures to eradicate poverty and enhance food security, repealing discriminatory laws, engaging with affected individuals and communities, and investing in health, green energy and other public goods. The panel will draw on examples of successful parliamentary action to discuss how to promote cooperation, mutual learning, and equitable and inclusive sustainable development for current and future generations.

Panel 4: What role for parliaments in shaping our digital future?

Digitalization is firmly embedded in all societies around the world, even as digital divides persist both between and within countries. Young people everywhere live in a world that seamlessly combines online and offline spaces. The world's biggest companies come from the technology sector, and they have a disproportionate influence over society, the economy and the future of the planet. In this fast-moving environment, what is the role of parliaments in shaping our digital future? As artificial intelligence (AI) emerges, with the attendant opportunities and risks, what lessons can be learned from the governance of technology, including the internet and social media, over recent decades?

The panel discussion will provide a space for sharing perspectives on the digital future that we want, and how to achieve it. Leading representatives from the United Nations system and civil society will reflect on progress and challenges in the 20 years since the World Summit on the Information Society, including recent initiatives surrounding the Global Digital Compact, the Internet Governance Forum and international governance of AI. Speakers of Parliament will offer insights into how their countries are taking action to promote innovation and protect citizens' rights in the fast-moving digital environment.

Panel 5: Protecting and promoting the rights of persons in vulnerable situations: Towards comprehensive anti-discrimination action

Anti-discrimination is a fundamental principle in international law and is enshrined in various global treaties and agreements. It is meant to protect persons in a wide range of vulnerable situations and help to avoid discrimination on grounds such as race, religious belief, age, national origin or disability, to name just a few. These vulnerabilities are also particularly prominent in situations of enforced internal displacement and migration. Yet still today, it is estimated that more than half of the world's countries do not have laws that provide effective and comprehensive protection against all forms of discrimination. Comprehensive and effective anti-discrimination laws are a crucial condition for equal participation in public life and the full enjoyment of human rights. The adoption of such laws should be part of a multi-faceted approach involving policy, education, advocacy and cultural shifts, to bring about real change to tackle discrimination.

The panel discussion will allow an exchange of good practices on the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in developing, enacting and implementing context-specific comprehensive equality laws as well as taking other steps to promote equality in practice and addressing the root causes of violence, deprivation, inequality, internal strife and conflict.

Interactive debate with major stakeholders

“Networked” global governance for more effective multilateralism: Does it work?

Concept note

For many years, the United Nations-led multilateral system has been deploying considerable efforts to effectively deal with the major global challenges of our time. Nonetheless, rising economic and social inequalities, pandemics, run-away global warming, the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence, and a growing number of conflicts with global repercussions are testing the limits of global governance. As a result, people and communities around the world are calling into question the very idea of multilateralism as an expression of democracy. There is a growing recognition that no single institution or group of actors can tackle these global problems alone, resulting in calls for a more inclusive multilateralism that involves a diverse array of stakeholders across all levels of society.

In recent years, and most notably in the [Our Common Agenda](#) report of the UN Secretary-General, a vision of a more “networked” international cooperation landscape has emerged, with a view to enabling key stakeholders to better contribute to decision-making outcomes and their implementation. In September 2024, endorsing this vision, governments worldwide adopted the [Pact for the Future](#). The document includes a strong commitment under Action 55 to “*strengthen partnerships to deliver on existing commitments and address new and emerging challenges*”. More specifically, governments have declared:

“We recognize the importance of the United Nations engagement with national parliaments and relevant stakeholders, while preserving the intergovernmental character of the Organization. The challenges we face require cooperation not only across borders but also across the whole of society. Our efforts must involve Governments as well as parliaments, the United Nations system and other international institutions, local authorities, Indigenous Peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, faith-based organizations, the scientific and academic communities, and all people to ensure an effective response to our common challenges.”

While the UN remains a cornerstone of international cooperation and multilateralism, contemporary global governance has also expanded beyond the formal structures of treaty-based intergovernmental organizations. It now includes parallel multi-stakeholder processes, such as international public-private partnerships, “informal” governance forums, global civil society coalitions and transnational private sector initiatives. These developments raise questions about the potential benefits and challenges of a more “networked” approach to global governance.

Parliaments also have a unique role in this landscape. Through its “parliamentary ecosystems” approach, the IPU has incorporated a broader perspective that looks at the actors, interactions and dynamics that both influence and are influenced by parliaments. Parliaments can play an important role in a “networked” approach to global governance by promoting accountability and democracy at the international level, carrying out parliamentary diplomacy in the service of peace, bringing the people’s voice to the multilateral landscape, and helping oversee the translation and implementation of international commitments into domestic policies.

This special interactive debate of the Speakers’ Conference will bring together Speakers of Parliament, civil society representatives, entrepreneurs and academics, as well as representatives of women’s, youth and other key stakeholder organizations. The purpose is to explore how a more inclusive and “networked” form of global governance can make multilateralism more effective, and to examine the implications and challenges of such an approach.

The following questions will drive the discussion:

- How can non-State partners go beyond merely providing input to global governance processes, to actually influencing outcomes?
- How can the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations best distil common perspectives from non-State partners contributing divergent views?
- Does the outsize influence of certain organized groups interfere with democratic decision-making?
- How can constituency groups be better included in parliamentary oversight of government interventions at the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations?
- How might the inclusion of multiple actors affect decision-making processes in terms of efficiency, coherence and accountability?
- What strategies could be employed to ensure that underrepresented groups such as women, youth and Indigenous Peoples can participate meaningfully in global governance discussions?
- What lessons can be drawn from existing collaborations between different transnational stakeholders, and how might these inform future approaches to multilateralism?