



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Strengthening democracy: Toward coherent and stronger support for resilient parliaments Geneva – 24 October 2025 Proposed agenda

Friday 24 October 2025

*Location: International Convention Centre Geneva (CICG)
Rue de Varembé 17 – 1202 Geneva*

09:00 – 09:15	Welcoming and opening
09:15 – 10:15	<p>Setting the scene: A moderated roundtable discussion with parliaments about the State, the challenges, opportunities and way forward for parliamentary democracies</p> <p>This moderated discussion will frame the expectations, challenges and opportunities facing parliament today, linking democratic resilience to broader governance and development dynamics.</p> <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the most pressing challenges to democracy in today's global environment and how are they affecting the work of parliaments? What specific challenges do parliaments face in times of political transition?• How have the roles and expectations of parliaments evolved in recent years, and how are they adapting to new realities (polarization, inequality, conflict and crises, climate, technology)?• What challenges and opportunities do these new realities present for the wider ecosystem of democracy and parliamentary development support?
10:15 – 10:30	Group photo and coffee break
10:30 – 12:00	<p>Session 1: <i>Democratic resilience: Defending and strengthening parliaments in troubled times</i> <i>Panel discussion</i></p> <p>In contexts of executive overreach, shrinking civic space and democratic backsliding, parliaments often find themselves constrained or co-opted. Yet they remain constitutionally essential institutions of accountability and legitimacy. This session explores how parliaments – and those who support them – can preserve democratic space and sustain institutional resilience in the face of political pressures or systemic shocks.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To examine strategies for safeguarding parliaments' core democratic role in protecting political pluralism and representative space.• To examine how parliaments can uphold the rule of law and balance of powers when faced with executive dominance or institutional capture. <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What practices have parliaments found effective in protecting democratic pluralism and representative space?• What strategies have proven successful in safeguarding the rule of law and maintaining the balance of power between the three branches of the State?• How can parliaments strengthen their collaboration with other branches of the State while preserving institutional independence?

12:00 – 12:30	<p>Ethical leadership, is it still possible today? A chat with....</p> <p>Is ethical leadership still possible in today's politics? Can MPs and political leaders truly stand up for causes and rights when faced with polarization, disinformation and personal risk? In an environment where algorithmic incentives and attention economy often reward provocation over principle, what does it take to lead with integrity?</p>
12:30 – 13:30	<p>Lunch break</p>
13:30 – 15:00	<p>Session 2: <i>Effective oversight: reclaiming parliamentary accountability</i> <i>Group discussions</i></p> <p>Accountability lies at the heart of democratic resilience. Yet in many contexts, elite capture, disinformation and erosion of institutional independence have weakened parliaments' ability to hold governments to account. Building on discussions held in Session 1, this discussion will focus on how parliaments can reclaim their watchdog role and how external actors can support them in that.</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To share effective tools and mandates for parliamentary oversight. ● To reflect on how parliaments can counter State and non-State capture, strengthen public norms and uphold accountability. <p>Four breakout groups to discuss strategies to enhance legislative integrity and oversight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Group 1: Addressing elite capture and disinformation ● Group 2: Building institutional independence ● Group 3: Addressing party discipline as a barrier to (conscience-based) representation? ● Group 4: Oversight in the digital age – artificial intelligence (AI), technology and integrity
15:00 – 15:20	<p>Coffee Break</p>
15:20 – 16:45	<p>Session 3. <i>Representation under pressure: rebuilding trust and protecting inclusive leadership</i> <i>Group discussions</i></p> <p>Across democracies, declining trust in politics and rising polarization have strained parliaments' ability to represent citizens, build consensus and engage constructively across divides. At the same time, violence and intimidation against MPs, increasingly amplified through digital platforms, pose a growing threat to inclusive leadership. Women MPs and representatives of minorities are disproportionately targeted, undermining diversity, deterring participation and eroding democratic legitimacy.</p> <p>Two breakout groups to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reimagining representation in polarized times: how parliaments can rebuild trust, foster inclusion and connect meaningfully with citizens. ● Protecting inclusive leadership: how parliaments can prevent and address violence against MPs, including gender-based and technology-facilitated violence, and foster a safe environment for diverse political participation. <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To assess how parliaments can connect with citizens in meaningful and inclusive ways (e.g. deliberative modalities, youth platforms, constituency dialogues, digital tools including citizen-led tech for participation and scrutiny). ● To evaluate the role of parliamentary communication, transparency, and participatory reform in restoring trust and shaping a more deliberative democratic culture.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To share best practices of institutional responses that parliaments can adopt to prevent and address intimidation and violence against MPs, including gender-based violence. • To explore how digitalization both enables new forms of participation and reshapes threats, including technology-facilitated violence. • To identify strategies that foster a conducive environment for ethical, inclusive and safe political leadership, backed by credible enforcement and political commitment. <p>Guiding questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can parliaments re-engage citizens in ways that build legitimacy and not just visibility? • What strategies to ensure that elected representatives can carry out their mandate free from violence and intimidation, safeguarding the rights to freedom of expression and to privacy?
16:45 – 17:15	<p>Concluding session: <i>What priorities for democratic resilience and parliamentary strengthening?</i></p>