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**United  
Nations**

# Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

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## Foreword by the IPU President, Dr. Tulia Ackson

As the IPU President and a Speaker of Parliament myself, I was deeply honoured to welcome Speakers and parliamentary leaders from some 120 countries to the United Nations Office at Geneva from 29 to 31 July 2025 for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (6WCSP).

Gathering amid rising global tensions and regional conflicts, the Speakers urged one another to step up to the challenges of the times and to reaffirm the importance of stronger and more effective multilateralism.

The Conference was one of those unique occasions where we, the world's top legislators – including many from countries in conflict – were able to convene in the same space to exchange ideas and voice our differences, but also to discover what unites us.

These exchanges deepened our understanding and reminded us that the role of parliamentarians extends beyond lawmaking and budgets: it is about sustaining dialogue, accountability and truly meaningful change to improve people's lives.

Throughout three days of robust debate, insightful panels, and frank negotiation, we adopted a landmark Declaration, which you will find on [page 22](#) of this report.

The Declaration confronts the reality of a world in turmoil, marked by deepening inequalities, protracted conflicts, democratic backsliding, a climate emergency and the dangerous erosion of multilateralism.

Yet above all, it stands as a call to take responsibility for peace, justice and prosperity for all.

It urges us to work towards a global order with people at the centre – one that places cooperation at the heart of policymaking, where gender equality is the norm, and in which youth, people with disabilities and underrepresented groups are fully included.

At a time when finding common ground, even common language, is rare, the Declaration stands as both testament to our resolve and an invitation to unity.

The Conference reaffirmed that, in a world marked by fragmentation and uncertainty, we must move forward together – not as isolated Speakers, but as a united parliamentary community committed to rebuilding trust and shaping a future worthy of the billions of people we represent around the world.



## Introduction by the IPU Secretary General, Mr. Martin Chungong

It is a privilege to introduce this report on the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, a milestone gathering that underlined the strength of parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue at a time when other forms of multilateralism are under strain.

Held in the newly renovated Palais des Nations, this historic Conference reaffirmed our conviction that parliaments are the beating heart of an inclusive, democratic and effective international system.

The rules and institutions that sustain international cooperation are being tested and in some cases undermined. Yet the presence, passion and unity of purpose of parliamentary leaders at this Conference testified to a shared belief: that dialogue, engagement and partnership are not only possible, but indispensable.

The IPU does not seek to compete with other international actors. Rather, our purpose is to complement and strengthen them. We consistently underline the central role of parliaments in turning global commitments into tangible progress for people everywhere.

This publication captures the broad scope of the Conference deliberations: the high-level Declaration adopted by Speakers, keynote statements from the IPU and United Nations leadership and from Michael Douglas, actor and UN Messenger of Peace, as well as reports from the five thematic panels and a special interactive debate with major stakeholders.

These panels addressed peace and security, the Sustainable Development Goals, digital technologies, human rights, and the participation of women and youth. The multi-stakeholder debate – with contributions from civil society, the private sector and International Geneva – broadened the conversation from parliamentary partnerships to wider cooperation for more effective multilateral outcomes.

# Background

Every five years, the IPU, in close cooperation with the United Nations, convenes a World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. This World Conference aims to advance strong and effective multilateralism, with the UN at its core and where parliaments and MPs are called upon to play a key role: promoting accountability and democracy in international relations, carrying out parliamentary diplomacy in the service of peace and understanding, bringing the people's voice to the UN, and helping to translate international commitments into national realities.

The first World Conference of Speakers of Parliament took place in August 2000 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on the eve of the UN Millennium Summit. The meeting concluded with a Declaration entitled [The Parliamentary Vision for International Cooperation at the Dawn of the Third Millennium](#). In turn, Heads of State and Government, through their own [Millennium Declaration](#), committed to strengthen the UN by more systematically engaging with parliaments – through the IPU as their global organization – to promote peace and security, economic and social development, international law, human rights, democracy, and gender equality.

Subsequent World Conferences have been held every five years in conjunction with the United Nations:

- [Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament](#) (UN Headquarters in New York, 7 – 9 September 2005) – see outcome on [Bridging the democracy gap in international relations: A stronger role for parliaments](#)
- [Third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament](#) (UN Office at Geneva, 19 – 21 July 2010) – see outcome on [Parliaments in a world of crisis: Securing global democratic accountability for the common good](#)
- [Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament](#) (UN Headquarters in New York, 31 August – 2 September 2015) – see outcome on [Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development: Building the world the people want](#)
- [Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament](#) (Virtual meeting, 19 and 20 August 2020 | UN Headquarters in Vienna, 7– 8 September 2021) – see outcome on [Parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for the people and the planet](#).

Preparations for the Speakers' Conference are guided by a Preparatory Committee (see [page 44](#)), chaired by the IPU President and composed of parliamentary leaders, representatives of the IPU Executive Committee, the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and the Bureau of Young Parliamentarians, the Secretary General of the IPU, and a high-level representative of the UN Secretary-General.

In 2025, the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament was held in the Palais des Nations, the UN Office at Geneva, from 29 to 31 July, preceded on 28 July 2025 by the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament (see [page 26](#)).

# Inaugural session

The Conference was opened on 29 July 2025 with an inaugural session in the Assembly Hall of the Palais des Nations; the first major event to be held in the historical part of the building since the completion of extensive renovation work under the Strategic Heritage Plan of the United Nations Office at Geneva.

**Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva**, welcomed delegates to the Assembly Hall, which was the largest room in the complex and had originally been constructed in the 1930s for the League of Nations. The latest renovations to the room had focused on modernization and improving accessibility, while also conserving and protecting the architectural heritage of the building and its surroundings. Given the value that the United Nations placed on its cooperation with parliaments, which it viewed as the beating heart of democracy, it was fitting that the Conference had been chosen to begin a new era in the Assembly Hall's history.

*A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held with the participation of dignitaries from the Conference, the Host Country (Switzerland) and the Strategic Heritage Plan Advisory Board.*

**Dr. Tulia Ackson, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**, welcomed participants and expressed her thanks to the United Nations Office at Geneva for hosting the Conference, and to the Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary-General for his unstinting support in the preparatory process. Noting that the IPU was engaged with the United Nations on a daily basis, she emphasized that the unique nature of the present Conference was its high-level of representation, giving Speakers a chance to take stock of where the global parliamentary community stood on major issues and what action it could take to support agreements at the governmental level. Speakers of Parliament held a unique vantage point from which they were well-placed to look at the bigger and longer-term picture. She encouraged Speakers to focus on three major issues during the Conference: the pursuit of peace as the supreme good of humanity, respect for the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, and the provision of a safe and healthy environment for all humankind. She further encouraged them to reflect on how the multilateral system could be reinforced to make it more efficient, impactful and accountable.

**Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary-General**, said that it was a pleasure to join Speakers of Parliament from around the world in the auspicious surroundings of the newly renovated building at the heart of Geneva, a city which embodied the spirit of multilateral cooperation. The UN Secretary-General believed that it was essential for the UN to reflect the realities of an interconnected world, especially at a time of profound global turbulence. The challenges the world was facing were testing the limits of current systems of governance and the future depended on global cooperation; no country could confront such challenges alone. A crisis of trust was emerging: in institutions, international cooperation and in democracy itself. Action 55 of the landmark UN Pact for the Future, adopted in September 2024, emphasized the need to strengthen partnerships across the whole of society. As the bridge between the global and the local, parliaments were at the heart of those efforts, as part of a wider ecosystem supporting democratic governance at every level. The intergovernmental system needed to be reformed to make it more democratic, accountable and connected, with a view to establishing a networked multilateralism that was agile, inclusive and grounded in the everyday concerns of people.

**Ms. Maja Riniker, President of the National Council of Switzerland and President of the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament**, conveyed a message on behalf of the Swiss authorities, congratulating the United Nations Office at Geneva on the inauguration of the Assembly Hall, which embodied a collective commitment to the future of multilateralism. She then presented the outcomes of the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, which had taken place the previous day at the headquarters of the International Labour Organization, also in Geneva. The discussions of the women Speakers had reflected a deep concern about the current state of the world and how women and girls were bearing a disproportionate burden from multiple crises. The outdated patriarchal norms of politics and international relations needed to change, allowing women to participate more equally and ultimately to create more resilient societies. The women Speakers had highlighted four key areas of action: rebuilding trust in democracy, putting gender equality at the centre of peace and security, confronting challenges such as climate change and technological progress through a gender-responsive lens, and, lastly, making gender parity the new norm, in partnership with men, for a future rooted in equality, dignity and peace for all.



A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held with the participation of dignitaries from the Conference, the Host Country (Switzerland) and the Strategic Heritage Plan Advisory Board. © Pierre Albouy/IPU



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



Ms. Maja Riniker, President of the National Council of Switzerland and President of the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament



Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary-General



Mr. Michael Douglas, actor, producer and United Nations Messenger of Peace

**Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**, echoed the welcome to Geneva extended by previous speakers and invited those present to consider it the second home of the global parliamentary community. He encouraged Speakers to face the uncomfortable truth that the multilateral system was in crisis, with many actors turning away or actively trying to undermine the long-established international architecture. If international cooperation were to be democratic and inclusive, then parliamentarians, as the elected representatives of the people, must play a prominent role. Since its foundation in 1889, the IPU had striven to bring the voice of the people to the multilateral system through parliamentary dialogue and diplomacy. Parliaments also had a vital role to play in ensuring that international agreements were translated into tangible actions for the benefit of the people. Rather than stepping back from the multilateral system, Speakers should work to recommit, revitalize and reinforce it, in the interests of shared values: human rights, democracy, inclusion and peace. Only a strong, democratic multilateral system, with parliaments at the forefront, could deliver peace, prosperity and justice for everyone.

**Mr. Michael Douglas, actor, producer and United Nations Messenger of Peace**, keynote speaker, thanked those present for the extraordinary work they did on behalf of democracies everywhere. He invited Speakers to take inspiration from the words of Buckminster Fuller, who had described the world as "Spaceship Earth," a shared vessel with no passengers, just crew: all of humanity, equally responsible for its care. As a young actor working around the world, he had been struck by how similar all people were, with the same basic hopes for themselves and their children: safety, opportunity and dignity. In 1998, he had been appointed a Messenger of Peace by Kofi Annan, and since then had seen many communities transformed by the work of institutions like the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

However, at present, the world felt more dangerous than it had ever done during his lifetime, notably due to defence budgets climbing, at the expense of healthcare, childcare, nutrition and education for millions. The crises the world was facing were too large, complex and interconnected for any one country to tackle alone, and isolation and division, along political, racial and economic lines, were rife within and between countries. People felt more detached than ever from institutions and multilateral organizations.

Returning to Buckminster Fuller, who in another work had talked about people as verbs rather than nouns, he encouraged Speakers to focus on three verbs. First, to tell their story, an action which could change hearts and minds, and encourage people to feel the impact of their work as parliamentarians and understand the need to protect it. Second, to expand the movement, by letting in people, especially those in marginalized situations, to not just observe parliamentary work, but shape it. Lastly, to hope, which he saw as facing hard truths with clear eyes and believing that it was possible to make a difference anyway. He urged Speakers to look to the dreamers, to select leaders willing to choose compromise over ego, and to view parliaments as lighthouses amid a tempest of authoritarianism. Issuing a clarion call to action, he encouraged participants in the Conference to adopt a positive vision for the future, to reach out to those on the margins, and to measure success in terms of strong institutions delivering justice, freedom and opportunity.

# General Debate: *A world in turmoil: Parliamentary cooperation and multilateralism for peace, justice and prosperity for all*



In the General Debate from 29 to 31 July 2025, a total of 110 delegates took the floor, including 78 Speakers of IPU Member Parliaments, four Speakers of IPU Associate Member parliamentary assemblies, two heads of observer organizations, and 24 heads of delegation or other speakers from Member Parliaments or Associate Members.

Throughout the General Debate, Speakers from around the world acknowledged the profound and interconnected crises facing humanity, while consistently advocating for enhanced parliamentary cooperation and revitalized multilateralism as the essential pathways to a more stable and equitable future.

A pervasive theme was the widespread acknowledgment of a world in profound turmoil. Speakers highlighted a multitude of escalating challenges:

- Armed conflicts and geopolitical tensions were at the forefront, with numerous mentions of the war in Ukraine and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- Other conflicts mentioned included those in Sudan, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It was noted that the proportion of the world's population engulfed by conflict had increased by 65% since 2021.
- Economic instability and deepening inequalities were frequently cited, with concerns about the global north's accumulation of wealth and its impact on developing nations.
- Climate change and ecological degradation were recognized as existential threats, disproportionately affecting vulnerable regions like small island developing States.

- Erosion of trust in international institutions and democratic norms was a recurring concern, coupled with the rise of populism, nationalism and disinformation.
- Many Speakers lamented the double standards and unilateralism that were undermining the international rules-based order.

Despite those challenges, there was an overwhelming consensus on the indispensable role of multilateralism, particularly through the United Nations, as the only viable path to navigate global challenges. Speakers stressed that no nation, however powerful, can solve transnational problems alone. Many called for a reform of the UN system, particularly the Security Council, to make it more representative, efficient and equitable, reflecting current geopolitical realities rather than post-World War II structures. There was a strong emphasis on adhering to international law and the rejection of rules-based orders that lack universal approval or are applied with double standards.

A defining message was the crucial and unique role of parliamentary diplomacy in fostering global peace, justice and prosperity. Speakers highlighted the role of dialogue in diffusing tensions, building solidarity, and fostering trust between nations, especially when traditional diplomatic channels are strained. The importance of supporting struggling democracies and consolidating their institutions was emphasized.

Parliaments, as direct representatives of the people, were seen as uniquely positioned to ensure that international agreements and commitments reflect the will and aspirations of citizens. Parliaments are essential for translating such agreements and commitments into domestic policies and laws. Speakers emphasized that parliaments are guardians of accountability, including holding governments responsible for their promises, such as funding UN contributions and aligning global and national development plans.

The debate was heavily marked by discussions on specific ongoing conflicts, notably the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which was an emotionally charged topic, with numerous Speakers condemning the recent events in Gaza as a tragedy and a crime against humanity. Many demanded an immediate and permanent ceasefire, the release of all hostages and prisoners, and the unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Speakers denounced the use of hunger as a weapon of war and the deliberate starvation of the Palestinian people. There was widespread support for a two-State solution as the only path to a just and lasting peace, with calls for the recognition of a Palestinian State based on international resolutions and the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The war in Ukraine also featured heavily, widely condemned as a blatant violation of international law and an attack on democracy and human rights. Several Speakers from Europe expressed unwavering support and strong solidarity with Ukraine, emphasizing the need for continued military and humanitarian assistance, especially air defence systems, to save civilian lives. The scale of the humanitarian crisis was also highlighted, including the abduction and forced deportation of Ukrainian children. Many Speakers decried the Russian Federation's lack of willingness to pursue peace, its targeting of civilians, and its destabilizing actions beyond Ukraine's borders, including its efforts to dismantle the European security architecture and create new spheres of influence.

Speakers also proposed approaches to addressing a wide range of systemic global challenges. The promotion of human rights, social justice and equality for all was a core value articulated by many Speakers. There were several calls for increasing women's participation in parliaments and decision-making processes. Many Speakers urged parliaments to prioritize legislative action on climate change, emphasizing environmental peace as essential for human peace.

Concerns were raised that only 40% of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been achieved globally, with many labelling the 2030 Agenda a failure and urging more efforts. The dual nature of new technologies, particularly artificial intelligence (AI) and social media, was discussed. While many recognized their potential, Speakers also expressed concerns

about risks such as manipulation, disinformation and the mass production of fake news. Speakers advocated for cross-border digital governance that is inclusive, fair and rights-based.

In a special segment, the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, noted that dramatic reductions in aid are severely impacting health services in developing countries but also present an opportunity to move from aid dependency to sustainable self-reliance. This resonated with interventions from Speakers on the economic vulnerabilities of developing nations and calls for fairer international financial architectures. Criticisms were raised about foreign aid often being used for political interference, leading to rule from abroad instead of genuine democracy.



Many Speakers emphasized that overcoming the current turmoil requires a renewed commitment to core values and specific actions. Parliaments were urged to act with moral clarity and political courage and to uphold principles like freedom, inclusivity, diversity, transparency and accountability. Several Speakers stressed that the Conference must be more than a "talking shop"; but rather a "working shop" where words are transformed into concrete action and ideas into reality.

A deepening of regional integration and the forging of agile partnerships were identified as crucial building blocks for a more robust multilateral system. Several Speakers encouraged the IPU to continue its work on intercultural dialogue to build trust and understanding between populations. The importance of the interests of future generations to parliamentary work was highlighted and Speakers emphasized the responsibility of parliaments to leave the world a better place for children.

The General Debate was underpinned by a powerful collective reaffirmation of the critical role of parliaments in shaping a better, more just, peaceful and prosperous world for all citizens. It was stressed that there can be no prosperity without peace and no peace without justice, which was a sentiment echoed throughout the Conference as a guiding principle for collective action.

# Reports on the panels

## Panel 1

The first panel was on the theme *Women's and youth participation in parliament in a time of polarization and adversity*. It was moderated by Ms. Rana Sidani, former Spokesperson for the WHO, IFRC and ICR



### Panelists:

- **Ms. Cynthia López Castro** (Mexico), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, member of the 15SWSP Preparatory Committee
- **Mr. Felipe Paullier**, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs
- **Ms. Gabriella Morawska-Stanecka** (Poland), Senator, Vice-President of the IPU
- **Ms. Diana Lutta** representing **Ms. Sofia Calltorp**, Director, UN Women Geneva Office and UN Women's Chief of Humanitarian Action
- **Mr. Wessel van der Berg**, Senior Advocacy Officer, Equimundo Center for Masculinities and Social Justice

The panel emphasized that, despite some progress in increasing the representation of women and youth in parliaments, the pace of change remained slow. As of 2025, women make up only 27.2% of members of parliament worldwide, and a mere 2.8% of MPs are 30 years of age and under, even though half the global population is under 30.

It was pointed out that exclusion could lead to an erosion of trust, and common and persistent challenges to achieving fully inclusive parliaments were highlighted. Those challenges included the deepening of polarization in the political landscape and a global pushback on women's rights. As a result, rising political violence – both online and offline – tended to target women, youth and people from diverse backgrounds disproportionately. Legislative barriers preventing young people old enough to vote from running for office were also highlighted.

While gender parity and equitable representation of youth were key, for diverse voices to fully contribute, lead and influence, representation must go beyond numbers in chambers and effective power and leadership positions must also go to youth and women. Panelists also suggested that parliaments could create or strengthen context-specific mechanisms to build inter-generational dialogue in their countries, which in turn could lead to bridge-building in a time of polarization.

Panellists and Speakers participating in the debate called for action in three key areas. First, adopting strong laws and policies such as gender and youth quotas could have positive impacts at the national level, as in the case of Rwanda and Timor-Leste. A review of the electoral system, along with the democratization of candidate selections and the removal of party-level barriers, could be complimentary steps in levelling the playing field. Women's and youth commissions and caucuses within parliaments were valuable initiatives to amplify women's and youth voices.

Secondly, an environment that was enabling for women and youth to participate and lead in must be created. With misogynistic comments and harassment inhibiting participation, special protection for women MPs in the United Kingdom and specific laws such as those in Mexico could help to combat gender-based political violence. Speakers also showcased efforts to drive gender-sensitive parliaments in line with the IPU's 2012 Plan of Action. That included initiatives to shift gender norms such as valuing the role of male MPs as fathers through "dads' caucuses" and promoting shared care responsibilities through internal parliamentary policies. To ensure that decision-making was shared, women and youth needed to be in high-level positions – such as Speakers, and included in decision-making processes by leading committees on finance, budgets and defence.

The third action focused on transforming mindsets through public outreach and awareness-raising. Parliaments not only had a key role but also held responsibility for leading a cultural shift away from male-dominated political environments, and ones that excluded youth. Various initiatives that were already underway were mentioned, such as the expansion of civic education through parliamentary open days, and women's and youth mock parliaments in Fiji, Slovakia and Sri Lanka.

As one Speaker put it, an inclusive parliament was not a luxury nor a favour. It was a matter of justice, and a precondition for peace and prosperity for all. A lot more remained to be done towards achieving gender parity and the equitable participation of youth in parliaments. In a time of increased polarization and pushback on women's rights and on core democratic values, it was agreed that parliamentarians had a collective responsibility to build a new path for societies, and engage all generations in decision-making.



## Panel 2

The second panel was on the theme *Innovating for a peaceful future, crafting new solutions for a turbulent world*. It was moderated by Ms. Rana Sidani, former Spokesperson for the WHO, IFRC and ICRC.



Panelists:

- **Ms. Kandia Kamissoko Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire), President of the Senate, former Foreign Minister
- **Mr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi** (United Arab Emirates), Member of the Federal National Council (FNC), Chair of the Defence, Interior, and Foreign Affairs Committees
- **Ms. Sanam Naraghi Anderlini**, Founder & CEO, International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN).
- **Mr. Zachary Paikin**, Deputy Director, Better Order Project, Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

**Ms. K. Kamissoko Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) shared her country's experience in rebuilding peace through inclusive dialogue, national reconciliation and equitable development, underscoring the importance of political will. A series of initiatives, including truth and reconciliation mechanisms, social cohesion programmes and dedicated ministries, focused on listening to victims, addressing grievances and promoting forgiveness. These efforts helped restore trust, strengthen national unity and support long-term stability. She emphasized that equitable infrastructure planning and non-partisan resource distribution were also essential to meeting community needs and sustaining peace.

**Mr. A.R. Al Nuaimi** (United Arab Emirates) emphasized the need to rethink the role of parliamentarians in diplomacy, urging them to act as independent representatives of the people rather than merely echoing government positions. In a shifting global order, he called for greater political courage and strategic vision from MPs to lead reconciliation efforts and build trust across divides. Highlighting the importance of people-to-people diplomacy, he stressed that sustainable peace depended on inclusive engagement, mutual respect and the willingness to listen, especially in disagreement. He concluded by warning that hate was the true enemy of peace and stability, and that addressing it required coordinated, inclusive action across education, legislation and community leadership.

**Ms. S. Naraghi Anderlini** (ICAN) underscored the urgent need to bridge the disconnect between elite-driven peace processes and the lived realities of communities, particularly those of women who were often the first to act in times of conflict but remained excluded from formal negotiations. She advocated for reframing peace efforts from “power-sharing” to “responsibility-sharing,” emphasizing that true leadership must address the needs of affected populations. She criticized the UN Security Council, especially its permanent members and their role as major arms exporters, for contributing to the erosion of trust in global institutions. She called on parliaments to advance inclusive peace through legislation and to redirect resources toward strengthening the social fabric of society.

**Mr. Z. Paikin** (Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft) argued that global security frameworks suffered from a lack of effectiveness and inclusiveness, citing the UN Security Council’s paralysis and limited representation. He proposed reforms including new permanent Security Council seats for Africa, Asia and Latin America, and a 25-yearly review of the Charter of the United Nations. On climate security, he highlighted proposals from his organization to create a P-20 platform, a global compact for climate visas, and a US\$ 15 to 20 billion fund to strengthen regional disaster response. He also called for new, regionally focused institutions to complement existing mechanisms and address the erosion of trust caused by unilateral actions and the contesting of norms.

In the ensuing interventions from the floor, participants reaffirmed the importance of inclusive peacebuilding rooted in national cohesion, social trust and strong democratic institutions. Many highlighted the erosion of public trust as a key driver of instability, underscoring the need to reconnect citizens with the State through equitable development, intergenerational dialogue and cultural identity. Dialogue, reconciliation and transparency were seen as essential ingredients for sustainable peace. Parliaments were widely recognized as crucial actors in translating international commitments into national action, particularly in areas such as conflict prevention, sustainable development and humanitarian response. Speakers stressed that peace required more than the absence of war; it demanded justice, dignity and respect for sovereignty, especially in regions affected by occupation, interference or exclusion.

Concerns were raised about the growing influence of the arms industry, rising global military spending, and the failure of multilateral mechanisms to prevent suffering and conflict. The need to redirect resources from the war economy to human security was strongly emphasized. Innovation, while acknowledged as a driver of progress, was also seen as a source of risk if not guided by ethics, regulation and a commitment to equity.

Several interventions underscored that conflicts were often rooted in poverty, exclusion and lack of opportunity, particularly for youth. Investing in education, job creation and social protection was seen as essential to addressing the underlying causes of instability. Others called for strengthened international cooperation to tackle climate insecurity, illicit financial flows and disinformation.

Across the board, participants called for bold, consistent and locally grounded actions from parliaments to uphold international law, support disarmament and promote inclusive development. A shared message emerged, echoing the principles of human security and common security: peace must be built from the ground up, with innovation, solidarity and human dignity at its core.

## Panel 3

The third panel was on the theme *Achieving the SDGs by 2030: What new opportunities for international cooperation?*. It was moderated by Ms. Claire Doole, spokesperson and former BBC correspondent.



### Panellists:

- **Ms. Thorunn Sveinbjarnardottir** (Iceland), Speaker of Althingi
- **Mr. Alban Bagbin** (Ghana), Speaker of Parliament
- **Ms. Susan Brown**, UN Assistant Administrator and Director of UNDP's Bureau for External Engagement and Advocacy
- **Ms. Georgina Magesa**, an 11-year-old climate activist from the United Republic of Tanzania

Before engaging in a debate, the panel reviewed the achievements made since 2015 in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): extreme poverty had declined; HIV infections were down; malaria prevention had saved millions of lives; more children were going to and staying longer in school; and presently, 92% of the global population had access to electricity. Those outcomes were not, however, accidental; they were the direct result of cooperation, policy choices, political will and also a change of mentalities. The progress that had been made clearly showed that results were achievable when there was cooperation and international solidarity.

The overall trajectory was, however, deeply concerning. Only 40% of SDG targets were on track. Climate action, in particular, was falling dangerously behind. It was pointed out that if people did not have access to their basic rights – such as health, employment, etc. – and if the environment was not sustainable, there would be no sustainable development. Without human dignity there was no sustainable development and there was no dignity without justice.

Focusing on the role of parliaments, the panel pointed out that parliaments were not bystanders in that global effort; instead, they were central actors, and citizens therefore expected parliamentarians to lead. To do so, parliaments must use their platforms to bring voices together – within their chambers, across parties and on the world stage through the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and other forums.

In terms of their legislative role, parliaments must set laws that helped implement multilateral agreements; must consider taxes and subsidies as a way to stimulate sustainable development; and parliamentarians must gather to share knowledge and raise awareness on those crucial issues.

Problems like climate change or economic inequality did not stop at national borders. Isolation was not protection; it was exposure. Parliaments must therefore legislate for the global good and ensure that laws for their communities were effectively implemented. The foundation of humanity's shared future depended on investment: in education, gender equality, jobs, healthcare, digital access. Without them, the SDGs were little more than promises on paper.

It was acknowledged that, at the same time, parliaments must confront a rising tide of misinformation, particularly around climate action. Digital manipulation was undermining science, eroding public trust and weakening democratic governance. That was not just an environmental crisis; it was a democratic one as well.

The world was witnessing an environmental collapse in real time – glaciers melted, oceans acidified, ecosystems unravelled. While some nations could adapt, many could not. In an interconnected world, their vulnerability was a collective risk. Climate action must be shared – and industrialized countries bore a historic and moral responsibility to lead.

The panel underlined that the private sector was vital. Its innovation and capital were essential, but it must not dictate the terms of progress, particularly on the climate, on digital transformation and equity. Legislators must establish strong, enforceable rules to prevent greenwashing, whether at home or abroad. Fiscal policy – including taxation – must reward genuine green innovation, not cosmetic compliance.

The reality was that SDG progress was deeply unequal. Many countries were not falling behind due to apathy, but because of global shocks, structural disadvantages and financing gaps. More was spent on war than on welfare, more on crisis than on prevention. If that continued, not only would the SDG agenda be lost but the very conditions for peace and prosperity.

Parliaments must listen to those whose lives were already affected. Young people across the world were not waiting – they were acting: planting trees, cleaning rivers, demanding justice. Their call was not for promises – it was for action, inclusion and accountability. They wanted, and deserved, to be at the table.

Parliamentarians knew what needed to be done. The solutions existed; scientists, policy experts, civil society leaders were ready. The SDGs were never about comfort – they were about courage. They were designed to be transformative, not incremental.

It was concluded that parliamentarians must be determined, more accountable and ready to change the way they proceeded to effectively achieve the SDGs. The time had come for that transformation and parliamentarians must rise to meet the moment with the urgency it demanded and the integrity it deserved.



## Panel 4

The fourth panel was on the theme *What role for parliaments in shaping our digital future?*. It was moderated by Ms. Caitlin Kraft-Buchman, CEO/Founder, Women at The Table.



Panellists:

- **Mr. Hugo Motta Wanderley da Nóbrega** (Brazil), President of the Chamber of Deputies
- **Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill**, UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Envoy for Digital and Emerging Technologies
- **Ms. Sulyna Abdullah**, Chief of Strategic Planning and Membership and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- **Mr. Jovan Kurbalija**, Executive Director, DiploFoundation and Head of the Geneva Internet Platform (GIP)

The panel on parliaments' role in shaping the digital future generated tremendous interest and debate, with 11 Speakers of Parliament and 8 other participants taking the floor.

Building on the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament (15SWSP), which had underscored that making artificial intelligence (AI) gender-sensitive would require coordinated and determined efforts, the panel reinforced that parliamentarians had agency and political power which should be used to ensure that AI served humanity's best interests.

The following four key issues emerged from the panel's discussion:

- **There must be a legislative balance between innovation and protection.**

There could not be a choice between innovation or protection of rights because both were needed. Accordingly, it was pointed out that the dichotomy between innovation and protection was an illusion. A responsible legal framework which anchored human beings at the centre while allowing digital technology to flourish was an imperative.

- **The principle of the "Three A's" – agility, adaptability, anticipation.**

Ms. Abdullah (ITU) presented a practical tool, noting that effective legislation needed to be: **agile** to respond in a timely fashion when technology advanced fast; **adaptable** to adjust as digital technological situations changed; **anticipatory** as there was a compelling need to plan ahead for the emerging digital technologies as driven by AI.

The panel observed that there was no clear template yet for AI legislation. The effectiveness of the European Union's AI Act would only become known over time. The United Nations had so far not produced a universal framework for AI governance. Parliaments were exploring a variety of legislative approaches. There was a need for ongoing exchange of experience and lessons learned.

- **International cooperation was recognized as a condition in tackling AI governance.**

The panel unanimously agreed that no individual stakeholder could tackle adequately the challenges of AI legal governance. It was, therefore, necessary that there should be a multilateral approach in mapping out AI governance to avoid legal gaps if each country singularly developed its own legal framework for AI governance.

Speakers emphasized that the UN Global Digital Compact, adopted in September 2024, demonstrated that international cooperation on digital governance was not just possible but was essential, especially if the digital divide was to be closed holistically.

The panel also noted that digital transformation must be environmentally sustainable, with countries leveraging renewable energy for AI development to mitigate possible environmental harm.

- **There was a need for capacity-building for parliamentarians.**

It was acknowledged that parliamentarians frequently might need to appreciate and understand better the ecosystem of digital technologies. The capacity-building needed for parliamentarians in this regard did not require them to be academics but to make them appreciate the societal impacts of digital technologies so that they were equipped to exercise robust oversight on their governments and the technological companies. What was necessary for parliamentarians in their capacity-building was to familiarize them with emerging digital technologies so that they were able to monitor trends and assess impacts on society.

In Zimbabwe, for example, a parliamentary Committee of the Future was being created to work with universities on AI research and development in order to assist parliamentarians to appreciate the digital technological development trends which should be understood by the parliamentarians.

Overall, the message from the panel was clear: parliaments had both the opportunity and responsibility to ensure that the digital future served humanity.

In that context, the IPU was co-organizing a conference on *The role of parliament in shaping the future of responsible AI* in Malaysia from 28 to 30 November 2025, to which parliamentarians were invited to participate.



## Panel 5

The fifth panel was on the theme *Protecting and promoting the rights of persons in vulnerable situations: Towards comprehensive anti-discrimination action*. It was moderated by Ms. Claire Doole, spokesperson and former BBC correspondent.



### Panelists:

- **Ms. Angela Thokozile Didiza** (South Africa), Speaker of the National Assembly
- **Mr. Angelo Farrugia** (Malta), Speaker of the House of Representatives, President of the IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law and member of the 6WCSP Preparatory Committee
- **Ms. Nada Al Nashif**, Deputy United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **Ms. Yvonne Apiyo Brändle-Amolo**, CEO of the Global Minority Parliamentarians Caucus and President of the Swiss Diversity Association

The panel explored both persistent and emerging challenges to the rights of persons in vulnerable situations, including racial minorities, LGBTQI persons, migrants, people with disabilities and others facing intersecting forms of discrimination.

Despite international commitments and constitutional guarantees, the panellists highlighted that more than three-quarters of countries still lacked comprehensive national anti-discrimination legislation. That legal vacuum significantly impeded protection and accountability. They also emphasized the critical role of parliaments in adopting robust anti-discrimination frameworks, overseeing their implementation and ensuring access to justice. Several interventions stressed that such laws tended to be durable and enjoyed broad support once adopted, even in politically diverse environments. However, it was also clear that legal protection alone was not sufficient. Gaps in implementation, a lack of enforcement mechanisms and political reluctance remained recurring obstacles.

Throughout the discussion, participants highlighted the importance of anchoring anti-discrimination efforts in the lived realities of affected communities. Those realities included experiences of racial profiling, structural bias in service delivery, and invisibility in national data collection. The need for disaggregated data and improved monitoring mechanisms came

up repeatedly, with some participants calling for parliamentary-supported platforms to track progress and inform policies.

It was also noted that the gap between international norms and domestic practice was growing wider through the erosion of multilateralism and increasing resistance to human rights. Several concerns were raised about the use of social media to amplify harmful stereotypes and scapegoating narratives.

Education and public engagement were identified as essential tools to promote inclusion and human dignity. Parliaments were called upon not only to legislate but also to act as forums for public debate and social dialogue. Examples of effective community engagement and human rights education were shared, underscoring the need to build a culture of rights from the ground up and to address the fears of those who felt threatened by diversity, in a way that fostered understanding, promoted equality and embraced diversity as a collective strength.

Throughout the discussion, the need for partnerships – with national human rights institutions, civil society, the private sector, and international bodies – was emphasized. Some participants highlighted the potential of cross-regional parliamentary cooperation to exchange good practices, monitor implementation and foster solidarity in the face of backlash. In this regard, the audience acknowledged the IPU as a valuable platform for parliaments to exchange experiences and approaches to addressing key challenges.

In the concluding reflections, the importance of political leadership and inclusive participation in driving change was emphasized. Calls were made to promote gender quotas and reserved parliamentary seats for marginalized communities. The panel underscored that fostering diversity, equity and inclusion was not merely a legal or policy issue – it was a question of democratic legitimacy and societal resilience.

# Interactive debate with major stakeholders: *“Networked” global governance for more effective multilateralism: Does it work?*

The panel examined whether a more inclusive, “networked” model of global governance could strengthen multilateralism, and how different actors – parliaments, civil society, business, academia, and international organizations – might contribute to more legitimate and effective outcomes. The panellists agreed that inclusion should not be symbolic but aimed at improving the quality, legitimacy and impact of decision-making. They stressed that parliaments, as representatives of the people, had a unique responsibility to connect global commitments with national implementation, and that non-State actors could enrich outcomes through expertise, advocacy and innovative solutions.

The discussion began by underscoring the paradox of participation: while opportunities for engagement had multiplied, many communities still experienced multilateralism as remote, tokenistic or inaccessible. For example, surveys showed that young people in particular doubted whether their voices truly mattered, and the dominance of well-resourced organizations, business interests or “government-organized NGOs” undermined confidence in the independence of the participation of non-State actors. This raised a central challenge: how to ensure that wider access led to more democratic outcomes, rather than simply filling the room with more voices.

In this regard, questions of efficiency, coherence and accountability featured prominently. Some cautioned that bringing more actors into the process risked slowing negotiations and producing fragmented positions. Others countered that efficiency had never been the UN’s mandate: better outcomes tended to emerge from deliberation, even if slower, just as inclusive democracies often took longer to decide but produced more durable results. The real concern, several argued, lay in accountability – who non-State actors spoke for, who funded them, and how to ensure transparency – without which their legitimacy would be challenged.

Trust was also a recurring theme. The relationship between governments and non-State actors was often marked by suspicion, especially at the national level, where civil society was often seen by governments as a “watchdog.” Panellists called for a reframing of this relationship as one of complementarity, in which civil society and States would work together to make outcomes more representative and easier to implement. Parliaments have particular responsibilities: to translate international commitments into laws and budgets, to provide oversight of governments to ensure commitments are being fulfilled, and to help familiarize citizens with global

initiatives and agreements in order to build support and sustainability for the changes being made to realize the related commitments. In this way, they could help restore the connection between people and the multilateral system.

Some examples from institutional practice illustrated the possibilities and limits of inclusive “networked” models. The International Labour Organization’s tripartite structure, where workers and employers shared equal decision-making power with governments, was cited as an enduring framework in which stakeholders shaped both input and outcomes. Multi-stakeholder frameworks such as the Kimberley Process, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Providers, had gone further, creating systems for monitoring and enforcement. These models showed that multi-actor governance could be both legitimate and practical, though they required patience and compromise. At the same time, the rapid spread of informal governance, seen in the G7, BRICS or “friends groups,” illustrated a different trend. While these forums could deliver quick results, they were more exclusive and less accountable, raising questions about whether speed was being traded for democratic legitimacy.

Panellists reflected on innovation and incentives. For example, networks of investors had mobilized billions of dollars towards climate-friendly solutions, and conditions placed on funding had forced companies to diversify their leadership and improve gender equality. Language itself was identified as a barrier: complex multilateral jargon often led to exclusion, whereas clear and accessible communication could make participation more accessible and meaningful. The debate touched on the ethical underpinnings of global cooperation. Some argued that the case for inclusion should not rest on efficiency alone but on moral responsibility, and on the obligation to act for the well-being of future generations and to treat their lives with the same dignity as one’s own.

Interventions from the floor reinforced and broadened these discussions. Parliamentarians from Sweden, Burkina Faso and Namibia brought national perspectives to the fore. Sweden emphasized the value of structured consultation with civil society, while underlining the central role of political parties as the main channel of democratic representation. Burkina Faso called for a model of governance that respected dignity and responded to people’s aspirations, particularly in fragile regions such as the Sahel. Namibia described a formal policy framework

for cooperation with civil society, including subsidies and partnerships to deliver services, but also warned against the risks of weak accountability and donor-driven agendas.

Stakeholders representing youth organizations, city networks, faith-based groups, scientific institutions and UN agencies added further dimensions. Youth representatives stressed that mistrust in political institutions ran deep, and urged leaders to engage with greater transparency and honesty. City representatives highlighted the local impact of global challenges and called for more substantial support for financing the localization of the SDGs. Faith-based groups and civil society coalitions underlined their convening power and their role in embedding a moral and ethical foundation for governance.

Scientific actors, notably the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), emphasized the importance of evidence-based policy and warned against the politicization of science. Health and development networks underlined how broad-based coalitions could deliver tangible results across countries.

The takeaways from the debate were clear. A networked model of multilateralism could not succeed through symbolism alone. It needed to empower underrepresented groups, strengthen trust between State and non-State actors, and translate participation into policies that improved people's lives. Parliaments, as representatives of the people, were seen as critical to this effort. Their task was to ensure that inclusive global decisions became legitimate national realities.



# Closing session

At the closing session on 31 July 2025, the following rapporteurs reported on the outcomes of the thematic panels:

- **Panel 1:** *Women’s and youth participation in parliament in a time of polarization and adversity*  
Rapporteur: Senator Cynthia López Castro of Mexico, President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, member of the Preparatory Committee for this Conference (see [page 10](#))
- **Panel 2:** *Innovating for a peaceful future, crafting new solutions for a turbulent world*  
Rapporteur: Ms. Kandia Kamissoko Camara, President of the Senate of Côte d’Ivoire (see [page 12](#))
- **Panel 3:** *Achieving the SDGs by 2030: What new opportunities for international cooperation?*  
Rapporteur: Ms. Thorunn Sveinbjarnardottir, Speaker of the Althingi of Iceland (see [page 14](#))
- **Panel 4:** *What role for parliaments in shaping our digital future?*  
Rapporteur: Mr. Jacob Francis Nzwidamilimo Mudenda, Speaker of the National Assembly of Zimbabwe (see [page 16](#))

- **Panel 5:** *Protecting and promoting the rights of persons in vulnerable situations: Towards comprehensive anti-discrimination action*  
Rapporteur: Ms. Angela Thokozile Didiza, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa (see [page 18](#))

Ms. Saara Nandjila Kuugongelwa-Amadhila, Speaker of the National Assembly of Namibia, and Mr. Thomas Brezzo, President of the National Council of Monaco, introduced the High-Level Declaration, *A world in turmoil: Parliamentary cooperation and multilateralism for peace, justice and prosperity for all* (see [page 22](#)).

In their closing remarks, Mr. Courtenay Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU, and Dr. Tulia Ackson, President of the IPU, thanked all those involved in making the Conference a resounding success and reemphasized their belief in the importance of revitalized multilateralism and parliamentary action towards creating a more peaceful, just and prosperous world.



# High-Level Declaration of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament<sup>1</sup>

(Geneva, 29–31 July 2025)

**A world in turmoil: Parliamentary cooperation and multilateralism for peace, justice and prosperity for all**

We, Speakers of Parliament from around the world, have come together to take stock of the many crises that engulf the world today, and to reaffirm the fundamental principles that must guide our future parliamentary action.

As Speakers, we can help inspire public debate, uphold democratic practices in our parliaments and engage in parliamentary diplomacy to advance peace and understanding among peoples. Above all, we can exercise moral leadership and serve as role models for our fellow parliamentarians and citizens at large.

## A world in turmoil

We note with concern that conditions around the world are not significantly better today than when we last met, in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, almost everywhere globally, we observe a pervasive sense of malaise and anxiety. This reflects, in our view, a lack of peace, understood not only as freedom from conflict but also as the fulfilment of basic human needs at the individual and societal level.

Particularly alarming is the accelerated erosion of multilateralism and the growth of self-seeking, zero-sum perspectives that overlook the complex realities on the ground. Progress towards a peaceful world and the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which inspired our past declarations, has all but stalled. In particular:

- We are witnessing a growing trend for disregard of the rule of law and increased threats to democracy, both nationally and internationally.
- Conflicts within and between countries, as well as civilian casualties disproportionately affecting women and children, have grown in number and scope. Unchecked, these conflicts have created circumstances in which violations of international humanitarian law and human rights are occurring with greater frequency. Terrorism and violent extremism remain prevalent features of the global landscape.
- Rising nationalism and the implementation of protectionist policies are eroding the spirit of collaboration and cooperation among nations. This trend poses a threat to global interconnectedness and challenges the principles of cooperation and solidarity that underpin multilateralism.
- Increasing disinformation and the misuse of global communication platforms has led to the distortion of public perception and decision-making processes. This phenomenon has the potential to sway elections, policy decisions and international relations.
- Progress in promoting inclusiveness, accessibility and support for people with disabilities in political offices has been slow, leading to a lack of representation and participation, which can perpetuate policies that inadequately address the needs and rights of the disability community.
- The number of forcibly displaced people is at an all-time high.
- An alarming resumption of the nuclear arms race with increasing threats of weapon use and the erosion of disarmament norms constitutes an existential risk to human survival.
- Politics has grown more fractured: too often opposing parties are depicted as enemies and common ground among political factions is too hard to find. The role of evidence-based decision-making and fundamental scientific truths is being called into doubt.
- The planet's carrying capacity, which determines the limits of sustainability, continues to be strained, with no end in sight. The world is facing a climate emergency, with most of the burden borne by developing countries and people in vulnerable situations.
- Poverty is again on the rise and inequalities are deepening.
- Economic and financial power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few, challenging principles of fairness, equality and inclusive participation. A comprehensive review of funding structures could facilitate better prospects to close existing gaps, reduce inequality, and encourage more cooperative participation among nations.
- Progress towards gender equality and the realization of women's rights is far too slow, facing resistance and regression in a number of countries.
- Intolerance towards migrants and refugees, faith-based communities, indigenous people and other people in vulnerable situations, including stateless persons, is resurgent.
- Artificial intelligence and other emerging information and communication technologies are penetrating every aspect of human existence with only limited tools to protect people and institutions.
- Young people remain extremely underrepresented in political decision-making when they, and future generations, will be most affected by the shortfall in efforts to address all these challenges.
- The existing international political and economic architecture has fallen short in responding to all the above challenges and crises.

<sup>1</sup> The term "Speakers of Parliament" is considered to encompass all presiding officers of unicameral national parliaments or of either chamber of bicameral national parliaments, regardless of their actual title ("Speaker", "President", "Chairperson", etc.).

To recover from this mix of slow progress, setbacks and emerging threats, we need to do more than simply address their main causes. Above all, we need to appeal to a basic sense of shared humanity and to work collectively towards a more peaceful, just and prosperous world that is solidly anchored in the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As long as there is no justice and impunity prevails for the perpetrators, there will be no real peace for people experiencing exclusion, exploitation, violence, discrimination and the denial of fundamental rights and freedoms.

### **Key transitions toward peace, justice and prosperity**

Inspired by the IPU's values and principles, as well as by the outcomes of major United Nations processes over the past few years, we conclude that building a more peaceful, just and prosperous world requires the following key broad policy transitions:

- Ensuring the complete and consistent observance of international law and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including sovereignty, territorial integrity, noninterference in the internal affairs of States and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in a coherent and non-selective manner.
- Building strong, transparent and accountable institutions to maintain peace and justice. This includes reforming judicial systems, enhancing law enforcement, and ensuring that governance structures are inclusive and equitable.
- Prioritizing and investing in conflict prevention, as well as redefining "security" more broadly, pairing the traditional concept based on military might with the approaches of human security and common security,<sup>2</sup> so as to achieve comprehensive and sustainable security.
- Promoting the peaceful, secure, open and inclusive use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), in accordance with international law, including international human rights law, and joining efforts to prevent and combat cybercrime and malicious cyber activity by supporting global and regional cooperation, capacity-building, and responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, including through the United Nations and its specialized bodies, while respecting privacy and other fundamental rights.
- More effectively embedding the SDGs into national policies, strategies and budgets to provide an integrated approach to eradicating poverty, addressing climate change, reducing inequalities, and fostering peace, justice and prosperity.
- Shifting the current economic paradigm to a more people-centred model based on cooperation, solidarity, inclusion and sustainability. Economic models such as the paid care economy, the green economy and the circular economy, among others, need to be mainstreamed. The transition away from an economy based on fossil fuels needs to accelerate if we are to enjoy a sustainable future on this planet. Simultaneously, this shift should be carefully

planned, taking into account different national circumstances and priorities. Cooperation should be the driving force of scientific and technological innovation for the betterment of humanity.

- Investing more in health, education, environmental preservation, and other public goods that benefit individuals directly. Expenditure on social programmes and public infrastructure should be seen as *investments* in the future and not merely as present-day costs. Austerity measures dictated by budget shortfalls and other financial imperatives need to be calibrated to protect the people in vulnerable situations first.
- Advancing gender equality, in law and in practice, in all fields and at all levels, especially in parliaments but also in international institutions, in civil society and in the business sector, as a necessary condition of peace, development and justice. The world cannot afford to waste 50% of its talent. Gender parity in parliaments is a key step in the meaningful transition towards achieving gender equality and respect for women's rights worldwide. Laws, policies and budgets must be analysed and monitored through a gender lens to ensure that they are delivered equitably and support a culture of zero tolerance of discrimination and violence against women.
- Empowering young people, harnessing their perspectives and potential, building their trust in policymaking and leveraging their innovation so they can better contribute to resolving global challenges. This includes boosting the political participation and leadership of both young men and women and delivering youth-responsive public policies in all fields.
- Valuing diversity in our societies as an asset to be nurtured and protected as opposed to a threat to be feared, including by ensuring that the rights of all individuals, as recognized in international human rights law, are respected and protected. Greater inclusion of diverse experiences and the cross-fertilization of ideas and cultures, which in turn enhance knowledge, lead to innovation and facilitate the efforts of all stakeholders to navigate the complexities of this century. More awareness of our diversity can also help to build tolerance, acceptance and mutual understanding between people, communities and groups, creating the conditions for lasting peace. Migration has long been a contributor to diversity as well as development and can be appropriately managed to maximize its benefits to both destination and origin countries.
- Embracing the idea that global problems require collective action based on the realization that no single State or group of actors can tackle these global challenges alone. Multilateral engagement is the most effective way for countries to find solutions to the burning issues of our time, from nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation to climate change, global financial stability, global health, international trade, artificial intelligence and migration. Multilateral cooperation mechanisms such as the G7, G20, BRICS, OECD and others need to work in close cooperation and coordination with the United Nations-led multilateral system.

<sup>2</sup> *Human security* focuses on protecting individuals from threats of fear, want, and indignity by addressing the root causes of insecurity and human suffering; *common security* embodies the idea that no nation can achieve security alone, at the expense of another, and that the best way for countries to build security is through cooperation, reciprocity and multilateralism.

- Reinforcing the practice of democracy in our countries and in international relations, with a strong emphasis on multilateral engagement, and upholding democratic values of transparency, inclusive dialogue and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout politics and society. Parliaments, as the core representative institution of the nation, have a special responsibility to embody democratic practices and values and ensure accountability.

### **Our commitment going forward**

We welcome the United Nations Pact for the Future of September 2024 and its accompanying Global Digital Compact and Declaration for Future Generations as the latest effort by the global community to reconstitute multilateral order on stronger foundations, turbocharge the SDGs and find common ground on the key issues of our time.

We highlight the crucial role of parliamentary organizations and inter-parliamentary cooperation in global governance, in particular in supporting respect for the norms and principles of international law, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, human rights and sustainable development.

We note in particular Action 55 of the Pact, which calls for a deepening of the engagement of parliaments in the work of the United Nations, including its inter-governmental processes, which builds on 25 years of growing interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU. We note with satisfaction the IPU's work to help democratize global governance by opening the United Nations-led multilateral system to the input of parliaments and parliamentarians.

With this background in mind, we will work to:

- Step up efforts to build stronger and more effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, that delivers for the people and the planet.
- Help advance effective reform of the United Nations, including of the Security Council, as well as of the global financial architecture, for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, for achieving the SDGs and closing the financing gap for developing countries.
- Ensure a fair, open, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core, and foster a favourable trade and investment environment for all.

- Raise awareness within parliaments of major United Nations agreements such as the Pact for the Future, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, among others, so that, within each national context, commitments are implemented through law, regulations, policies and budgets.
- Encourage parliamentary oversight of the positions taken, and agreements entered into, by governments at the United Nations and other international forums.
- Share knowledge with constituents and the public at large of major United Nations agreements to support deeper national ownership and understanding of their goals.
- Ensure more active participation of our parliaments in key United Nations and other global processes in order to provide input and enhance parliamentary ownership of relevant outcomes, paying particular attention to the inclusion of all major political forces and the participation of women and young people.
- Facilitate gender equality and greater representation of youth as well as people in vulnerable situations and other underrepresented groups in our parliaments to better reflect their share of the general population and ensure their participation and influence. This includes ensuring that parliaments are safe environments free from discrimination and violence.
- Open our parliaments up to greater participation in the legislative process by civil society, the business community, the scientific community, labour unions, faith-based communities, minority groups as well as citizens at large in all their diversity.
- Strengthen trust and embrace hope for our common future through the IPU's work on interfaith dialogue.
- Pursue parliamentary diplomacy as a complement to governmental efforts in order to prevent and resolve conflict by addressing its root causes, engaging in direct dialogue with all relevant actors, and prioritizing civilian safety and respect for International Humanitarian Law.
- Recognize and promote science diplomacy as a fundamental tool for addressing the problems the world faces, informing decision-making processes and advancing diplomatic objectives more broadly. Parliaments should actively support the integration of scientific expertise into diplomatic efforts and use evidence-based approaches to create more informed policy.
- Support the prevention of arms-inflicted human suffering and ensure parliamentary oversight of commitments to disarmament and arms control measures and to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Encourage parliamentary hearings that, inter alia, examine the root causes of conflict and insecurity, such as climate change, environmental degradation, food insecurity, disease, poverty, social exclusion and discrimination.

- Actively participate in global efforts to regulate and harness the potential of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, in order to maximize their benefits and minimize their risks.
- Support a plan of action to build digital competencies among parliamentarians and the parliamentary administration, to ensure that parliament is a modern institution that is equipped to shape our digital future, notably with regards to the ethical regulation of artificial intelligence.
- Promote inclusive and effective legislative processes, to support a culture of mutual respect, dialogue and understanding within parliamentary deliberations, ensuring that all voices, perspectives and constituencies are heard and valued.
- In parliaments where one does not already exist, consider the establishment of a parliamentary Committee of the Future to deal with emerging cross-cutting issues.

We thank our hosts, Switzerland and the United Nations Office at Geneva, as well as the United Nations Secretary-General and the President of the United Nations General Assembly, for their support of our Conference, which has been yet another demonstration of the close partnership between the IPU and the United Nations: one of the keys to making this world a better place, with pathways to peace, justice and prosperity for all.

*N.B. It is recognized that due to their constitutional positions or other factors, certain Speakers cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements, and therefore should not be seen as indicating specific support for all sections. Nonetheless, on behalf of their chambers, they recognize the importance of the issues raised and the intentions of their colleagues in proposing particular ways forward.*



# 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament

On 28 July 2025, the world's top women legislators gathered in Geneva for the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament (15SWSP) hosted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the National Council of Switzerland under the theme *Leading for inclusive and lasting peace*.

The Summit was held immediately prior to the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. It resulted in a final declaration which contributed to the Conference's proceedings.

A total of 26 women Speakers of Parliament, 4 women Deputy Speakers representing their women Speakers and 3 women presiding officers of parliamentary assemblies, among over 350 participants from 31 countries, were in attendance.

Women leaders discussed how the most pressing global challenges – from climate change and technological transformation to the erosion of democracy and human rights, alongside entrenched inequalities – are reshaping the prospects for peace. These challenges often have a disproportionate impact on women. While women are among the first to respond, they are often the last ones to be heard.

Amplifying women's voices and leadership is not only a matter of fairness, but of effectiveness. Peace agreements are more sustainable and lasting when women are involved. Yet, in 2023, only 9.6% of peace negotiators globally were women. When it comes to national parliaments, despite growing evidence of the correlation between women's leadership and bold action for peace and climate, in 2025, only 27.2% of members of parliament and 23.7% of Speakers were women.

As 2025 marks 30 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for gender equality and women's empowerment, and 25 years of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the Summit reaffirmed existing commitments, and highlighted the importance of placing gender parity in decision-making at the centre of multilateral and national efforts.

The Summit comprised two sessions. The first focused on the 25 years of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. The women Speakers agreed that peace is not only the absence of war but the presence of fairness. Inclusive and lasting peace requires strong, coordinated and gender-sensitive action, which must be led by men and women on an equal footing. Sexual violence in conflict, which was described as a weapon of war, was intended to disrupt lives and societies. As such, there could be no inclusive peace without justice for survivors, who must be recognized as leaders and central actors in peacebuilding.

Speakers agreed on the need to redress women's underrepresentation in peacebuilding, adopting gender-responsive laws and budgets, and breaking harmful social norms in the security sector. Proposals for concrete responses included increased funding to women-led peace organizations, and the development of WPS National Action Plans that mandate the collection of gender-disaggregated data and the allocation of dedicated budgets, set targets and provide for parliamentary oversight.

The second session addressed two other pressing global challenges: climate change and artificial intelligence (AI). The debate on climate change stressed that its impacts were not gender-neutral but exacerbate existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. Women often bear a disproportionate burden due to their concentration in subsistence agriculture, limited access to resources, and greater unpaid household and care responsibilities. Climate-related disasters were also linked to increased gender-based violence, forced marriage, school dropout of girls, and sexual and reproductive health risks linked to the disruption of related services and water scarcity.

Speakers called for gender-responsive climate policies, equal access to land and property, the allocation of dedicated resources to women beneficiaries, and the full inclusion of women in climate response and environmental decision-making. They also called for measures to protect women human rights defenders, who are on the frontlines of climate action and environmental protection.

During the debate on AI, the women Speakers overwhelmingly agreed that it was not too late to shape it as a tool for gender equality. They stressed the imperative of women's leadership in the development, governance and regulation of emerging technologies, so as to ensure these systems are inclusive, free from bias, and supportive of social cohesion and gender equality.

Speakers agreed on the need for diverse AI development teams, strong legal frameworks, and accountability from technology companies. They called for measures to address online gender-based violence, ensure unbiased algorithms, and protect women's rights in digital spaces. This is particularly important in the face of rampant online violence against women in politics. Good practices discussed included the adoption of dedicated provisions to criminalize and prosecute acts of gender-based political violence and online violence, as in Mexico, as well as of legal frameworks to regulate AI, as in the European Union.

The Summit concluded with a shared commitment by women Speakers to lead the transformation for inclusive and sustainable peace, namely by:

1. **Rebuilding trust in democracy by ensuring that parliaments are inclusive and gender-sensitive institutions.** This requires tackling harmful stereotypes and outdated norms and putting an end to all forms of violence and harassment against women in politics. This also means engaging young people – especially young women – so that politics becomes a space where their leadership is welcome.
2. **Placing gender equality at the very centre of peace and security.** Women must not only be present but empowered, supported and resourced to take decisions at every stage in diplomacy, conflict prevention, negotiations and post-conflict recovery. International humanitarian law must be upheld and the consequences of conflict must be addressed in a gender-responsive manner.
3. **Confronting challenges such as climate change and technological advancements through a gender-responsive lens.** This includes ensuring women’s leadership in climate negotiations, as well as in the development and governance of new technologies, and developing gender-responsive policies in these fields.

4. **Making gender parity the new norm.** Women’s representation in parliaments has doubled in the past thirty years, and the number of women Speakers has grown significantly, but parity is the objective and that objective is still far from reality. The implementation of gender quotas remains a crucial driver of gains in this area.
5. **Leading by example by joining the IPU’s *Achieving gender equality, action by action* campaign.** Speakers and MPs were encouraged to join the campaign and take the transformative actions it calls for.

As witnessed by their final Declaration, the women Speakers stand ready to act as models for inclusive leadership and inclusive multilateralism. They also stressed that gender inequality cannot be tackled by women alone and that men must play their part.



# Final Declaration of the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament

## Leading for inclusive and lasting peace

Monday, 28 July 2025

The 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament (15SWSP), convened by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in close cooperation with the Swiss Parliament, took place in Geneva, Switzerland, on Monday, 28 July 2025. 29 women Speakers of Parliament and 3 presiding officers of parliamentary assemblies and organizations, among about 330 participants from 37 countries, were in attendance.

As an outcome of their deliberations, the women Speakers of Parliament adopted the following final declaration:

1. *We, women Speakers of Parliament*, gathered at the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament at a critical juncture and in a year of many milestones for the women and girls of the world, marking the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 10-year milestone of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the 25 years of existence of the Women, Peace and Security agenda, aiming to inspire the next chapter in the pursuit of gender equality and women's empowerment and leadership,
2. Deeply concerned by the growing sense of despair and disillusionment over the state of global affairs, and the alarming disregard for democratic values and principles, universal human rights and international humanitarian law, the erosion of trust in institutions, and the spread of polarization, conflict and hostility that undermine civic cohesion and inclusive peaceful governance,
3. Concerned that persistent negative norms and stereotypes related to masculinity and femininity, and the roles of men and women, continue to shape the conduct of politics and international relations, often reinforcing exclusion and adversarial approaches that undermine inclusive and sustainable peace,
4. Alarmed by the toll of armed conflict on civilian populations and underscoring that armed conflicts disproportionately affect women and girls; that gender-based violence, including its use as a weapon of war, is one of the gravest threats to security, exacerbating existing inequalities, and obstructing paths to justice and sustainable peace,
5. Expressing our solidarity with all women and girls in areas of conflicts and wars,
6. Recognizing the importance of respecting civilizational and religious pluralism in shaping models of women's empowerment and leadership, including those models based on religious references and national traditions,
7. Convinced that the voices and leadership of women are integral to accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, yet continue to be excluded from decision-making roles in processes critical to mitigating risks, responding to crises and building resilience,
8. Affirming that gender equality<sup>3</sup>, inclusivity and women's leadership are critical to sustainable peace and security, as recognized in the Women, Peace and Security agenda, with clear evidence showing that inclusive, multidimensional, multilateral and participatory processes, led by women and showing due respect for international law, contribute to conflict prevention, resolution, and post-conflict recovery, and result in more durable and effective peace agreements,
9. Concerned that the underrepresentation of women in peace mediation and negotiation remains a significant barrier to achieving lasting peace and inclusive governance,
10. Gravely concerned by the significant underrepresentation of women in diplomatic roles, as highlighted by UN General Assembly resolution 76/269, reaffirming the critical importance of advancing women's leadership in foreign affairs, multilateral institutions and diplomacy to strengthen inclusive global governance, and acknowledging the importance of the International Day of Women in Diplomacy in order to promote the full and equal participation of women at all levels of diplomacy,
11. Emphasizing that science and diplomacy are linked in addressing transboundary challenges, and that the role of women diplomats and scientists is pivotal and in need of empowerment in shaping both scientific and political solutions,

<sup>3</sup> In IPU's *Plan of action for gender-sensitive parliaments*, adopted unanimously by the 127th IPU Assembly (Quebec City, October 2012), the IPU defines gender equality as follows: "Gender equality means that women and men enjoy full and equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities".

12. Certain that today's most urgent global challenges, including climate change, technological transformation, the erosion of human rights and entrenched gender inequality, are reshaping the prospects for peace, and require strong, coordinated and gender-sensitive leadership and action in partnership between men and women,
13. Worried that women are persistently underrepresented in climate decision-making and recognizing that climate change intensifies precarity and drives instability, particularly in fragile contexts, with impact on women and girls,
14. Recognizing that emerging technologies are transforming societies and governance, bringing both opportunities and serious risks, and concerned by the lack of gender-inclusive political dialogue on the governance of artificial intelligence,
15. Stressing the imperative of women's leadership in the development, governance and regulation of emerging technologies, to ensure these systems are inclusive, free from bias and supportive of social cohesion and gender equality,
16. Welcoming progress in women's representation in national parliaments, which has more than doubled over the past 30 years, growing from 11.3% in 1995 to 27.2% in 2025, noting that the implementation of gender quotas, or other initiatives and supports that increase women's participation in politics, remains a crucial driver of these gains, welcoming progress in women's leadership of parliaments from 10.5% 30 years ago to 23.7% today, and calling for continued commitment and accelerated action in partnership between men and women towards parity in participation and leadership,
17. Affirming that gender parity is fundamental to the legitimacy, resilience and effectiveness of democratic institutions across all areas of life, and convinced that achieving gender parity in parliaments and decision-making spaces is more urgent than ever to effectively address global challenges and to build inclusive and sustainable peace,
18. Reaffirming our unequivocal commitment to achieving gender parity, as enshrined in the plan of action for gender parity in parliament adopted at the IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians in March 2025 in Mexico, which was a decisive call to make parity a universal political standard, in line with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's General Recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems,

We commit to:

- Engage within and beyond our parliaments to raise awareness of the importance of multilateralism and inclusive interparliamentary dialogue as a fundamental trust-building mechanism for effective international cooperation and sustainable peace.
- Call for full respect of international humanitarian and human rights law, working through our parliaments to promote peaceful, negotiated settlements in place of a growing reliance on violence and war, and addressing their gender-related consequences, and reaffirm the urgency of gender-sensitive diplomacy and inclusive peace processes as the only sustainable path to lasting peace.
- Support women's leadership in diplomacy and foreign affairs by strengthening gender-balanced representation across all levels of diplomatic service and supporting inclusive foreign policy institutions that reflect and drive systemic change in global governance.
- Encourage all institutions, governments and organizations engaged in mediation and negotiation to adopt gender-inclusive policies and ensure the meaningful participation of women at all stages of these processes; and to further urge the allocation of adequate resources, training and support to empower women mediators and negotiators, particularly at the grassroots and community levels.
- Promote greater awareness in our parliaments of sustainable and inclusive peace as a multidimensional process by placing gender equality at its core.
- Lead a paradigm shift in politics by transforming our parliaments into gender-sensitive institutions while confronting harmful gender norms through inclusive procedures, sustained capacity-building and structural reforms.
- Step up efforts to rebuild trust in democratic institutions by fostering inclusive leadership and addressing the root causes of disengagement, particularly among younger generations, to bridge the widening generational divide.
- Reiterate our commitment to making parity the norm within and beyond our parliaments, while actively supporting global advocacy to encourage and enable all parliaments to adopt gender-sensitive practices and structures.
- Strengthen the response of our parliaments to address all forms of violence against women and gender-based violence within and beyond parliaments, by adopting and upholding zero-tolerance laws and policies, reinforcing accountability and treating this issue as a fundamental challenge to democracy.
- Take urgent action to ensure women's full participation in climate change responses and recognize that gender-responsive strategies are essential to building resilience, enabling adaptation and driving a just, equitable transition.

- Strengthen institutional knowledge and parliamentary capacities to oversee emerging technologies, ensuring their governance is inclusive, gender-sensitive and free from bias, with women equally represented with men in the design, development and oversight of these systems.
- Promote science diplomacy by championing gender-balanced representation of women diplomats and scientists in multilateral scientific forums, and foster clear pathways for girls and young women to enter and thrive in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) – building on successful models such as the Women in Science (WINS) programme and encouraging their deployment worldwide.
- Leverage the milestone anniversaries in 2025 of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Women, Peace and Security agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the 40th anniversary of the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians to accelerate implementation and renew commitments to gender equality and inclusive peacebuilding.
- Join the IPU *Achieving gender equality, action by action* campaign, promote the campaign in our parliaments, and implement the 10 most transformative and urgent actions that it calls on us to take.

We will ensure that this outcome document informs the proceedings of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, with a view to prioritizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls on the agenda of all parliaments.

*NB. It is recognized that due to their constitutional positions or other factors, certain Speakers cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements, and therefore should not be seen as indicating specific support for all sections. Nonetheless, on behalf of their chambers, they recognize the importance of the issues raised and the intentions of their colleagues in proposing particular ways forward.*



# Speech by Ms. Tatiana Valovaya

## United Nations Under-Secretary-General Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva

### Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony – Reopening of the Assembly Hall Geneva, 29 July 2025

Distinguished Speakers of Parliament,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to welcome you all to the Palais des Nations for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

This is a significant moment for us at the United Nations Office at Geneva because this high-level conference is the first event that takes place in this Assembly Hall after its renovation.

The Assembly Hall is the largest conference room at the Palais des Nations, with the capacity over 2,000 seats. It was built in the 1930s for the League of Nations, and inaugurated 88 years ago, in 1937. It was possibly the first meeting room equipped to provide simultaneous interpretation. Since then, the Assembly Hall has gone through two makeovers – in the 1960s and in 1990s to accommodate the new delegations and to improve its acoustics and technical equipment.

The latest renovation works through the Strategic Heritage Plan (SHP) focussed on modernization, accessibility, conservation and protection of architectural heritage, as well as integration and harmony with other buildings.

For decades, the Assembly Hall has been a place where Member States come together to debate, negotiate, and shape our collective future. The Assembly Hall hosted the annual meetings of the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization. It also accommodated some meetings of the United Nations General Assembly.

Reopening this room today, after four years of renovation, in the presence of parliamentarians from around the world, is a reminder of the enduring importance of multilateralism in upholding the values of the United Nations and shaping our joint future.

The United Nations deeply values its cooperation with parliaments, which are the beating heart of democracy. Parliamentary leadership is indispensable to the multilateral system: you craft laws, shape budgets, and hold governments to account. We are very pleased that the new era for the Assembly Hall starts with this World Conference.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, an opportunity for reflection on our past, and on activities and partnerships that will carry us forward into the future. More than just a conference room, the Assembly Hall stands as a symbol of multilateralism and a platform for collective action.

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank:

- all Member States for their vision to strengthen Geneva as a global center of international cooperation,
- our Host Country Switzerland for their continued support,
- members of the SHP Advisory Board for their guidance throughout this project, and
- the Strategic Heritage Plan team for their work and expertise.

I would now like to invite the officials present at the podium, distinguished representatives of the Host Country and distinguished members of the SHP Advisory Board to join me for the ribbon-cutting, as we formally reopen the Assembly Hall and mark this new chapter together.

Thank you.

# Speech by Dr. Tulia Ackson

## IPU President

**Inaugural session of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament  
Geneva, 29 July 2025**

Madam Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva,  
Madam Riniker, President of the National Council of Switzerland,  
Mr. Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU,  
Mr. Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary-General,  
Mr. Douglas, UN Messenger of Peace and our very special guest,

Esteemed Speakers of Parliament,

Dear colleagues,

Welcome to the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament!

It is my great honour to greet you as President of the IPU and Speaker of the National Assembly of the United Republic of Tanzania.

First of all, I want to thank you, Ms. Valovaya, for hosting us in this magnificent, newly renovated Assembly Hall. For the past five years, the UN Office at Geneva has been pursuing its Strategic Heritage Plan, aimed principally at modernizing and preserving this historic building to make it fit for purpose for the 21st century. I congratulate all those involved in transforming and protecting this impressive room – you have truly done a wonderful job.

I would also like to extend a special thanks to Mr. Rattray, for participating in the preparatory process for this Conference on behalf of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Guterres. Your support to us has been invaluable.

The UN is our close partner because, since our first Conference in the General Assembly Hall in New York in the year 2000, our vision has always been about strengthening the UN-led multilateral system in the face of mounting global challenges. Parliaments have a key role to play in this regard.

The IPU is engaged with the UN one way or another on practically a daily basis. We cooperate on virtually all of the main issues on the international agenda, from poverty to climate change, sustainable development, democratic governance, gender equality, disarmament, science and technology, and human rights.

The IPU Assemblies cover all of these topics in their many dimensions and conclude with resolutions that provide guidance to parliaments around the world, as well as input to the relevant UN processes.

The unique aspect of this Conference is its level of representation. We come together every five years because of the special leadership role we exercise as Speakers. Our purpose is not to come up with a new policy agenda, but to take stock of where we are as a parliamentary community and to boost parliamentary action in support of agreed commitments.

From our Speaker's Chairs in each house of parliament, we can do more than act as guarantors of parliamentary procedures: we can help our parliaments look beyond the immediate debates of the day and keep an eye on the big picture.

Short-termism is one of the many ills of our times. It forces too many of our fellow parliamentarians to act quickly and reflexively, looking for immediate gratification for this or that group. It is what ends up distracting us from the issues that matter most.

And what are those issues? I will group them in three categories:

- peace, as the supreme good of humanity and the most important condition for development, individually as well as collectively,
- the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms, as key pillars of democracy,
- the provision of education, health, housing, nutrition, decent work and a healthy environment for all, as the affirmation of fundamental human rights.

The Declaration that we expect to adopt at this Conference builds on IPU positions over many years and provides a clear vision of what we need to do as a parliamentary community going forward.

To advance resolutely toward that vision, we must first contend with the divisive politics that pit people and parliamentarians against each other, leaving little room for dialogue and compromise. The divisions within our societies are not just ideological but have their roots most tangibly in inequalities that are becoming entrenched and growing wider, with power and wealth concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

We need to counter the destructive force of injustice with a political culture of cooperation, solidarity and unity, based on the simple construct that we are here in this world together, and that we are all dependent on one another. Inclusion should be a key tenet: our institutions need to reflect diverse experiences and ideas, and we can achieve that through the greater participation of women and youth, people with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations.

Indeed, there is no such thing as a totally self-made person: we are all products of our communities and of our interaction with others, starting with our parents, day after day, for our entire lives.

In Africa we express this idea in one word: Ubuntu. Which roughly means: I am, because you are.

Likewise, there is no such thing as a nation that can live and prosper in isolation from the rest of the world. There can be no national interest defined in total juxtaposition to what is good for the world as a whole. Now more than ever, as the world has grown smaller and more interdependent, countries need to work together to find solutions to their common problems.

The UN-led multilateral system was created 80 years ago, in the wake of a devastating world war, precisely out of this fundamental realization. To anyone who thinks that the UN and multilateralism have run their course, I say: think again.

The problem with the UN today does not come so much from its institutional set up, but rather from the same divisive politics that afflicts so many of our countries. When countries cannot reach agreement at the UN or fail to deliver on their UN commitments, it is often a reflection of dysfunctional politics at home.

In each country, parliaments are part of the system of government and constitute the main political arena where opposing interests need to be reconciled. So, getting our parliamentary houses in order, through dialogue and cooperation, and with the search for the common good as our shared objective, is a key step to making multilateralism work more effectively.

The multilateral system today is being challenged, and there is indeed an urgent need for UN reform to render the system more efficient, more impactful and more accountable. However, our multilateral system is not broken. A broken system is one that cannot renew itself, whereas the UN has undergone countless changes over the years to keep the organization up to speed with the times.

Colleagues,

There is no question in my mind that our best hope for peace, justice and prosperity for all, is through a stronger multilateral system with parliaments playing a key supportive role.

We must guard against a negative narrative that posits the United Nations as powerless, and ultimately dispensable.

Those who seek to undermine the multilateral system and the central role of the UN do so very intentionally as a way of weakening the rules that were meant to benefit the entire international community.

Weaker rules always benefit the more powerful, who have the means to assert their will over the others, sometimes getting away with murder, literally, with total impunity.

Let us work together to make sure that we retain and reinforce this vital institution. This is our responsibility as Speakers and parliamentary leaders working for the good of all our people.

In his famous inaugural speech many years ago, President John F Kennedy pronounced some powerful words that resonate to this day as a universal call to action: ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

To which I add, humbly: ask what you can do for the world.

Thank you.

We will now see a short video on the IPU's 136th anniversary.

# Speech by the Mr. Courtenay Rattray Chef de Cabinet of the UN Secretary-General

**Inaugural session of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament  
Geneva, 29 July 2025**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Speakers of Parliament,

Dear friends,

It is a pleasure to join you today on behalf of Secretary-General António Guterres at this Sixth World Conference of Speakers.

Geneva, as host of various United Nations entities has long embodied the spirit of multilateral cooperation at its very core.

I thank our generous host, the Swiss authorities and the President of Parliament, for their warm welcome.

I am especially pleased to be here at the renewed historical building which is a timely venue to start this General Debate aimed to renew our commitment to multilateralism.

The Secretary-General believes that it is essential to reflect the realities of our interconnected world and the voices of all its people.

And it is especially critical now, at this time of profound global turbulence.

From the climate crisis to conflict from pandemics to the disruptive power of artificial intelligence the challenges we face are complex, cascading, and borderless.

And they are testing the limits of our current systems of governance.

Our future depends on global cooperation to address global risks.

The recently published UN Global Risk Report sends a clear and urgent message: no country, company, or institution can confront these global vulnerabilities alone.

The survey results demonstrated that across all regions, environmental risks emerged as the highest priority, with climate change inaction and large-scale pollution ranking at the top.

Societal and political risks also featured prominently among the top concerns, reflecting widespread unease.

Mis- and disinformation, rise in inequalities, geopolitical tensions, mass movement of people and large-scale wars ranked among the top ten risks.

These challenges are testing the limits of our current systems of governance.

But they are also revealing something deeper: a crisis of trust.

Trust in institutions.

Trust in international cooperation.

And, in some places, even trust in democracy itself.

That is why the Secretary-General has called for a fundamental renewal of multilateralism.

This vision is at the heart of *Our Common Agenda*, and it is now enshrined in the Pact for the Future, adopted by Member States in September 2024.

However, it requires action to bring those commitments to life, and all of you are critical.

As Action 55 of the Pact puts it: we must strengthen partnerships across the whole of society.

That includes Parliaments, civil society, local authorities, Indigenous Peoples, youth, the private sector, and more.

Because the challenges we face cannot be solved by any one entity alone.

And the legitimacy of our responses depends on the breadth of voices shaping them.

In this regard, parliaments have a unique and indispensable role in this landscape.

Indeed, UN country teams around the world are honoured to work with Parliaments across many areas, including advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Pact for the Future is intended to accelerate these efforts.

In that journey, your role is pivotal – you are the bridge between the global and the local.

You translate international commitments into national law.

You hold governments accountable.

You bring the voice of people into the heart of global decision-making.

And you are essential to help ensure that legislation and national budgets advance the Pact for the Future at the country level.

As Secretary-General Guterres has said, “Parliaments are the beating heart of democracy.”

But in today’s world, that lifeblood also flows beyond borders.

That means strengthening parliamentary diplomacy.

It means ensuring that national debates reflect global realities.

And it means building what the Inter-Parliamentary Union calls “parliamentary ecosystems” – networks of actors and institutions that support democratic governance at every level.

This is the essence of networked multilateralism.

It is not about replacing the intergovernmental system.

It is about reinforcing it – by connecting it more deeply to the people it serves.

That is why this conversation matters.

But if we are to renew multilateralism, we must root it in the lived realities of people.

We must make it more democratic, more accountable, and more connected.

And we must recognize that parliaments are not just national institutions.

They are global actors – with a vital role to play in shaping the future we share.

Let us also be clear: this is not about idealism.

It is about realism.

The complexity of today’s challenges demands a multilateralism that is agile, inclusive, and grounded in the everyday concerns of people.

And, once again, Parliaments are uniquely positioned to bridge that gap – between global ambition and local action, between international norms and national implementation.

In this spirit, let us work together to build a multilateralism that is not only networked – but trusted, transparent, and transformative.

Thank you.

# Speech by Ms. Maja Riniker

## President of the National Council of Switzerland, President of the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament

**Inaugural session of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament  
Geneva, 29 July 2025**

Madam Tulia Ackson, President of the IPU,  
Madam Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office  
at Geneva,  
Mr. Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU,  
Mr. Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary-General,  
Mr. Douglas, United Nations Messenger of Peace,  
Honourable Presidents of Parliament,

Dear colleagues,

Before presenting the outcomes of the Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, I would first like to say how honoured Switzerland, and the Canton and City of Geneva are to celebrate today a major milestone in the life of the Palais des Nations: the reopening of its restored Assembly Hall. This place is not only a symbol of Geneva's international vocation; it embodies our collective commitment to the future of multilateralism.

Since 2014, Switzerland and the Geneva authorities have supported the Strategic Heritage Plan with an interest-free loan and various other facilities. But this project transcends our borders: it belongs to all Member States, as evidenced by the steadfast support of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Strategic Heritage Plan is more than just a renovation project. It is a commitment – made by Switzerland and the international community – to preserve the very architecture of dialogue, diplomacy and peace. It ensures that the Palais des Nations will not remain a monument to the past, but a living space dedicated to global cooperation for decades to come.

The Assembly Hall alone carries universal symbolic significance. It is here that the voices of States, civil society and multilateral institutions come together. Its rebirth is a powerful moment: in a world marked by fragmentation, we are choosing to regenerate the places where consensus is built.

For Switzerland, this moment reaffirms our role as Host State and partner of the UN in Geneva, as well as our enduring conviction that multilateralism, though under strain, remains indispensable.

We warmly thank you for your support for the Strategic Heritage Plan, for the UN in Geneva and for the values that bring us together. We look forward to continuing our collaboration on all these fronts in the future.

Dear colleagues, it was in this spirit of cooperation and shared commitment that the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament was held yesterday.

We met at a moment that is both challenging and promising. This year marks thirty years since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for gender equality and women's empowerment and twenty-five years since the adoption of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. These milestones remind us how much progress has been achieved so far but also how urgent it is to accelerate our action for gender equality to become a lived reality by all women and girls, for the good of the whole of society.

Our discussions yesterday reflected a deep concern about the state of our world. Many people feel disillusioned and distrustful of institutions. Polarization and hostility are eroding cohesion, and violent conflicts continue to devastate entire communities. Women and girls bear a disproportionate share of these crises. And yet, their voices and leadership continue to be kept away from the decision-making tables where solutions are shaped.

We also acknowledged that politics and international relations are still influenced by outdated patriarchal norms that foster exclusion and adversarial approaches. This must change, because gender equality is not just a matter of fairness, it is a matter of common sense. When women participate equally in decision-making, peace agreements last longer, democratic institutions are stronger, and societies are more resilient.

From this perspective, our message is clear: as leaders of our parliaments and as members of the international community, we must act with urgency and purpose.

We have highlighted four key areas of action that I invite you to also take:

One, we need to rebuild trust in democracy by ensuring that our parliaments are inclusive and gender-sensitive institutions. This means making sure women can participate fully and safely. This also means tackling harmful stereotypes and outdated norms and putting an end to all forms of violence and harassment against women in politics. This also means engaging young people – especially young women – so that politics becomes a space where their leadership is welcome.

Two, we must put gender equality at the very center of peace and security, now. Conflicts disproportionately affecting women and girls, gender-based violence used as a weapon of war have to stop. Women must be in peace negotiations and peace processes equally with men. We must ensure they are not only present but empowered, supported and resourced to take decisions at every stage of diplomacy, conflict prevention, negotiations, and post-conflict recovery. We must also ensure that international humanitarian law is upheld and that the consequences of conflict are addressed in a gender-responsive manner.

Three, we must confront challenges such as climate change and technological advancements through a gender-responsive lens. Women in leadership in climate negotiations, STEMs and boards of tech companies and gender-responsive policies in these fields are the way to go.

Four, we must make gender parity the new norm. Women's representation in parliaments has doubled in the past thirty years, and the number of women Speakers has grown significantly, but the objective is parity, and that objective is still far from reality. Gender parity is fundamental to the legitimacy and effectiveness of our democracies. That is why we all joined the IPU's *Achieving gender equality, action by action* campaign and I invite all of you to also join that campaign and take the transformative actions it calls for.

These are not abstract commitments. They are concrete steps we must take as Speakers of Parliament: embedding gender equality in peace, climate change and technology; guaranteeing women's equal participation in human security, peacebuilding, and diplomacy as well as in climate action, science and technology; strengthening our resolve, laws and policies to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls; and transforming our institutions into gender-sensitive ones that embody gender equality and deliver it to society.

The outcome of our Summit is both a reflection of shared concerns and a call to action.

Inclusive, gender-responsive leadership is not only the right thing to do, but also the smart thing to do. It is our strongest foundation for peace, security, and sustainable development.

To move forward, we need more than symbolic gestures. We need men as partners for gender equality to accelerate action and work together toward full parity in participation and leadership.

As leaders of our parliaments and as members of the international community, we have the influence and responsibility to drive change.

Let's take action together to turn promises into progress and shape a future rooted in equality, dignity, and peace for all.

Thank you.

# Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong

## IPU Secretary General

**Inaugural session of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament  
Geneva, 29 July 2025**

Madam Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva,  
Madam Riniker, President of the National Council of Switzerland,  
Dr. Ackson, President of the IPU,  
Mr. Rattray, Chef de Cabinet of the United Nations Secretary-General,  
Our special guest, Mr. Douglas,  
Esteemed Speakers of Parliament,

Dear colleagues,

It is a great honour to welcome you to Geneva: the city of peace, diplomacy, human rights – and indeed the second home of our global parliamentary community. Since the turn of the 21st century, every five years, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has convened Speakers of Parliament to take stock of the state of the world, to build and strengthen parliamentary diplomacy in the service of peace and understanding, and to advance strong and effective multilateralism.

As we begin our Sixth Conference, we have to face an uncomfortable truth: the multilateral system as we know it is in crisis. Some actors are not just turning away from long-established mechanisms, but actively trying to undermine them. The United Nations in particular is under immense pressure to reform and revitalize, to build on its 80-year history and embrace the challenges of the next 80 years. So it is a fitting symbol that we are meeting here in the newly refurbished Palais des Nations.

The United Nations Office at Geneva has recognized the need to modernize its infrastructure to respond to new challenges and preserve its heritage. Let us hope that those efforts have laid the groundwork for the UN and all other organizations of what we call International Geneva to find a new resolve and serve the people of the world for decades to come. On that note, I believe the presence of the world's Speakers in the very first meeting being held in this renovated historical building conveys a powerful message: if international cooperation is to be democratic and inclusive, then parliamentarians – as the elected representatives of the people – must play a prominent role.

Since 1889 the IPU has served that very noble cause: to bring together parliamentarians from around the world to engage in dialogue and diplomacy, to bring the voice of the people to the multilateral system, and to find solutions to the urgent problems our world is facing. And here I must emphasize that, above all else, the IPU – and I think every single one of its Member Parliaments – wants these events to be inclusive, respectful and safe. We are not just here to talk, but to listen. We are not here to score political points or to let emotions get the better of us, but to engage with our colleagues from around the world in a spirit of integrity, solidarity and respect. This is not a space for emphasizing divisions but for building bridges. I urge you to bear this in mind in the coming days.

Of course, no one would dispute that the formal negotiation and conclusion of international agreements lie firmly within the domain of governments. But international cooperation does not end with the signing of agreements; on the contrary, that is where it truly begins. Cooperation becomes meaningful when multilateral commitments are translated into tangible actions, when the decisions that are taken in New York, Geneva, Nairobi or Vienna are brought home and implemented for the benefit of the people.

In this regard, parliamentary diplomacy – nurtured and supported by the IPU for 136 years – is an important complement to traditional diplomacy and cooperation efforts between governments. The IPU does not seek to compete with the United Nations, but to complement it. Last year, we were pleased to see that relationship recognized explicitly in the Pact for the Future through a commitment to deepen United Nations engagement with national parliaments and the IPU. The IPU will continue its efforts to engage parliamentarians not only to implement United Nations agreements and resolutions, but to bring their valuable experience and expertise to the processes leading to their creation.

Our General Debate in the coming days will focus on how continued inter-parliamentary cooperation can strengthen the multilateral system. Because when that system is threatened or undermined, it is not a call to step back and let it crumble, it is a call to *recommit*, to *revitalize*, and to *reinforce* it, ensuring that our shared values are truly reflected within it: human rights, democracy, inclusion, and peaceful dialogue as the *only* legitimate path for resolving disputes between nations.

Thus, we will also delve into certain important issues in depth in our panel discussions. First among them will be a discussion of women's and youth participation in parliament. As I am sure you know, gender equality is at the heart of the IPU's Strategy and runs like a red thread through all of our work. In 2025, the IPU membership has chosen gender equality as the IPU's priority theme. As you have just heard, yesterday we concluded the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament. But earlier this year we also held a hugely successful Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians in Mexico City. At our 150th Assembly in Tashkent, we were pleased to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and to launch our new campaign, *Achieving gender equality, action by action*. I hope all of you here will take time to reflect on whether your Parliament could adopt any of the 10 actions set out in the campaign. I also wish to inform you that at this Conference there is a special booth set up for you to sign up to IPU's *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign. Only 22 Speakers of Parliament are needed for us to reach our goal of 100 Speakers signed up. So I encourage you all to join our movement and help us reach this important milestone.

Tomorrow, the first panel will look at peace and security, which I am sure we can all agree, with conflict still rife in many corners of the world, is at the top of the multilateral agenda. Then, with just five years to go on the 2030 Agenda, we will be looking at new opportunities to reinvigorate the Sustainable Development Goals. Another subject on everyone's minds is the emergence of new technologies, perhaps most notably artificial intelligence: we will also therefore be taking an opportunity to explore what role parliaments can play in shaping our digital future. Finally, as we are in the city of human rights, we will be inviting you to discuss how parliaments can protect the rights of people in vulnerable situations and fight the scourge of discrimination.

With a view to delivering on the IPU's commitment to engage with the broader parliamentary ecosystem, on the final day we have arranged a unique interactive debate with major stakeholders from International Geneva and beyond. We hope that this will provide an opportunity to explore how a more inclusive and networked form of multilateralism could yield more effective outcomes.

I will leave you with one final reflection. You may be aware that the IPU's motto is "For democracy. For everyone". We work on many fronts to strengthen the democratic credentials of our Member Parliaments. And we do so because we believe that democracy is the very foundation of multilateralism. And that only a strong, democratic multilateral system, with parliaments at the forefront, can deliver peace, prosperity and justice for everyone.

I wish you a fruitful Conference. Thank you.

# Keynote address by Mr. Michael Douglas

## UN Messenger of Peace

Geneva, 29 July 2025

### I. INTRODUCTION

President Ackson, Secretary-General Chungong, Director-General Valovaya, Ambassador Rattray, Speaker Riniker, distinguished parliamentarians, peacemakers, and public servants – thank you. Thank you for your generous invitation, and warm welcome. Most of all, thank you for the extraordinary work you do on behalf of our democracies. Standing before you, I am humbled – and I am grateful.

Some of you may know me as Michael Douglas, the activist; others, as Michael Douglas, the actor. But 60-odd years ago, I was simply Michael Douglas, the student. And back then, a philosopher, architect, and inventor named Buckminster Fuller came to speak at my university. Fuller urged us to imagine our world as a shared vessel: *Spaceship Earth*, he called it. A fragile craft, careening through the cosmos, with no passengers – only crew. All of us, all of humanity, equally responsible for its care.

Fuller believed our greatest challenges – war, inequality, environmental exploitation – weren't inevitable. We had the tools to build, rather than destroy. We simply needed the willpower, and one another.

It's easy to say that in hindsight, Fuller's speech marked a turning point in my life. But I think I knew, even *then*, that his words changed something in me.

### II. MY CAREER

After graduating, I had the good fortune to travel the world as a young actor – and collaborate with international casts, and local crews. And what struck me, again and again, was how similar we all were. No matter what language they spoke, person they loved, or god they prayed to – everyone wanted the same things for themselves, and their children. Safety. Opportunity. Dignity.

And it wasn't just the people I met that compelled me to realize Fuller's vision. It was the work itself, too. In 1979, I helped make a film called *The China Syndrome*, about a near-meltdown at a nuclear power plant and the corporate cover-up that followed. In a terrifying twist of fate, the movie was released twelve days before the real-life crisis at Three Mile Island.

It was a frightening moment – and a galvanizing one. I started reading more, about the half-life of plutonium and sheer scale of ballistic missiles. Listening more to the experts who have long sounded the alarm about nuclear brinkmanship. And it brought me to the United Nations, where, in 1998, I was appointed a Messenger of Peace by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

In this role, I've seen progress happen up close: not in sweeping cinematic gestures, but in small steps forward. I think about my time in the Kono diamond-mine district of Sierra Leone, back in 2002. At the time, the country was emerging from over a decade of brutal civil war. The wounds – physical, psychological, societal – were still raw.

Tens of thousands were killed or maimed; millions more were displaced, as warlords battled for control of institutions and resources. Over half of the rebel combatants – and a quarter of the government ones – were child soldiers: more than 100,000 young boys and girls, drugged, intimidated, torn from their families.

And yet, despite having every reason to give up on the world – the Sierra Leonean people hadn't. I spoke to survivors working with local peacebuilders to rehabilitate former child soldiers. I learned about women organizing to reclaim political power. I saw teachers returning to the classroom, nurses returning to clinics, civil servants returning to their communities.

And what made it all possible, was all of you, all of us. International institutions like the UN, lending development support. Bodies like the IPU, helping establish democratic governance and uplift its champions. Peacekeepers from around the world. Civil society leaders on the ground.

Now, Sierra Leone is far from perfect today. But it is far freer and steadier, its people more prosperous and hopeful than I could have imagined 23 years ago. Indeed, there are so many countries and communities transformed by the work of institutions like this one; so many lives saved by our shared purpose, and collective action.

### III. WHERE WE ARE

And yet, right now, the world feels more dangerous than at any point in my lifetime.

Us non-proliferation folks have always been a quixotic bunch. But today, as the Doomsday Clock ticks closer to midnight, as *China Syndrome* appears less fiction than prophecy, our mission sometimes feels like a desperate holdout against the inevitable.

And it's not just nuclear weapons. Nations are spending more and more on machines of war, and less and less on the people they're purporting to protect. As defense budgets climb into the hundreds of billions, millions go without access to healthcare or childcare, food in their bellies or quality education – the true foundations of security.

As a result, inequality within and between countries is an ever-widening chasm. Look anywhere, and you see the consequences of our choices: generations trapped in cycles of violence, families ravaged by hunger, the Earth itself buckling under the weight of exploitation.

I know that many in this room entered public service to change that. But unfortunately, not everyone is driven by such noble motivations.

Esteemed parliamentarians, *greed is not good*. Money has corrupted politics. And now, what once felt like a uniquely American problem has taken root elsewhere: distorting representation, fueling corruption – and, in our case, propping up a two-party system that feels increasingly unfit to meet the moment.

### IV. THE CHALLENGE

The crises we face are far too large, complex, and interconnected for any one country to tackle alone. And that, of course, is why this body was created in the first place. To invite collaboration across borders, and amidst political and cultural differences; to remind us that compromise is not the enemy of sovereignty, but the foundation of peace and progress. The United Nations was born – just a few months after I was! – with that same spirit. And over the years, it has helped knit together a web of global organizations and norms.

It's easy to take our multilateral system for granted. That is, until it starts to unravel.

Just a few years after I became a Messenger of Peace, the United States withdrew from the IPU. In the time since, we've continued to distance ourselves from the very institutions we helped create: the UN and NATO; climate treaties and arms control agreements; as well as the spirit of shared responsibility

Fuller spent his life advocating for.

And it's not just our foreign policy. This isolation runs deeper. We are more divided within our countries along political, racial, and economic lines. We are more lonely as individuals: flooded with digital content, but starved for meaningful connection.

And we are more detached from the institutions that connect us. For many, parliaments feel distant. Bureaucracies feel unaccountable. Multilateral organizations feel abstract. People don't just doubt their efficacy. They doubt their intentions: whether these bodies were built for ordinary folks in the first place.

And when that doubt hardens into cynicism, it opens the door to something darker. We've seen it in rising authoritarianism and political violence. In attacks on the free press and election workers. In a politics of us-versus-them that punishes cooperation, and demonizes the most vulnerable among us.

And nowhere is this crisis more vivid, more painful, than in my own country, the United States.

We were once leaders on the world stage. Architects of the United Nations. Participants in the IPU. Disciples of diplomacy and multilateralism. At home, too, we believed in the promise of government to accomplish big things, and protect the little guy.

But somewhere along the way, something broke. People watched powerful interests shape laws behind closed doors, while everyday problems went unaddressed – to say nothing of the urgent, existential challenges that face us all.

As a result, some have chosen to check out while others have chosen to lash out. We've seen armed mobs storm our Capitol, public servants threatened, harassed, and even killed, elections called into question because the outcome was unfavorable to one side.

Our institutions are in trouble. Which means all of us are in trouble, too.

### V. THE SOLUTION: I SEEM TO BE A VERB

And yet, just as the IPU is threatened by this challenge it was also purpose-built to address it. When the ties that bind us fray, when trust and cooperation erode – that's where you come in. More than just lawmakers, you're bridge-builders: leaders with power to restore, and restore faith in the institutions that serve us all – and remind the world that we can meet this moment, if we meet it *together*.

And to do that, I want to return to Buckminster Fuller one more time. Not to *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* – but to another book of his: *I Seem To Be a Verb*. Fuller wrote: “*I live on Earth at present, and I don’t know what I am. I know that I am not a category. I am not a thing – a noun. I seem to be a verb, an evolutionary process – an integral function of the universe.*”

And so, my friends, this is my call to you. Let us not be a system to defend, or a relic to preserve, or a symbol to aspire to. *Let us instead be verbs*. And, in particular, this is what I ask that we do.

## VI. LET US BE VERBS: TELL OUR STORY

First, let us *tell*. *Let us tell our story*. And I know what you might be thinking: “tell” is an odd verb to begin with. Doesn’t the story come before the telling? But that distinction is part of the problem. Too often, we draw a false line between action and communication, when the two are inextricably linked.

It’s a lesson I learned from my father. He was best known for his roles on the silver screen – and by the way, if you ever thought you had a lot to live up to, try having Spartacus as your dad.

But at the height of the Cold War, my father traveled behind the Iron Curtain with the U.S. Information Agency – to screen his films, and speak about the principles behind them. Resistance to tyranny. Freedom of expression. The inherent dignity of every person. The values that enabled a poor Jewish kid, a “ragman’s son”, from an immigrant family to rise above his circumstances, and achieve the American dream.

My father was a veteran, and an activist; he fought on the battlefield and testified before Congress to defend those values. But some of his most impactful work happened in those screening rooms. Because telling stories can change hearts and minds. Telling stories can change the world.

Now, I’m not suggesting an IPU blockbuster – though I wouldn’t be opposed to one. But here’s what I am suggesting. The IPU has done so much good: defending the rights of persecuted MPs and promoting gender parity in legislative bodies; enabling dialogue amidst escalation and shepherding non-proliferation and disarmament legislation through parliaments.

This includes production of excellent parliamentary resources like the IPU’s *Assuring our Common Future*, an online handbook for parliamentarians produced in cooperation with the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs and PNND.

Now, in addition to doing that work, we also have to help people *see it* or even better, *feel it*. We need to tell them about it, in terms they understand. Because that’s how they’ll know it’s real. That’s how they’ll know it’s worth protecting.

## VII. LET US BE VERBS: EXPAND OUR MOVEMENT

That requires looking to new storytellers and new audiences to connect with. And that brings me to our second verb: *expand*. *Expand* our movement.

For people to trust institutions like this one, institutions like this one need to trust the people. To treat them not only as voters to be courted – or worse, roadblocks to an antidemocratic agenda – but as changemakers in their own right.

So, fling open your doors. Allow the world to step in, or better yet, allow yourselves to step out, into that world. Close the distance – literal and symbolic – between those who write the laws, and those whose lives are touched by them. Encourage people not just to observe the work, but to shape it. That especially goes for those at the margins: the women, people of color, religious minorities, LGBTQ+ people, and young people, who have, for too long, been absent from decision-making fora.

One of the most powerful ways we can do that is invest in local government: the school boards and city councils and zoning commissions that determine what our children learn, how our neighborhoods grow, and whether democracy is something people feel in their daily lives.

More than that, local government is where people hone their leadership, learn their values, and earn the trust of their neighbors. And so, when we expand our institutions, expand our *thinking*, to empower those leaders – especially young leaders – we’re not only building stronger communities; we’re building a pipeline of talented public servants for national office, too.

I think of my son, Dylan, who serves in local government in New York. He’s young – about 50 years younger than his colleagues. But his youth endows him with that powerful combination of optimism and pragmatism; the ability to see what others may not, see *who* others may not. It’s a spirit found in young people across the globe – activists, civil servants, community organizers, who refuse to sit down and wait their turn.

These leaders are closer to the ground, to the people they serve, less beholden to big money, or partisan politics. And so, expanding to include them is the floor. We must trust them to bring us into the future, and empower them to build a better one for us all.

## VIII. LET US BE VERBS: HOPE

There's one more verb I have for you. And it is, quite simply, to *hope*.

I'm not talking about wishful thinking, or willful ignorance. The idea that if we stop talking about nukes, they'll just go away; if we turn a blind eye to dark money, it doesn't exist.

No, hope is facing hard truths with clear eyes – and believing we can make a difference anyway. It's planting seeds of peace and prosperity, even if we're unsure we'll live to see them blossom, and trusting that the next generation will tend them, help them take root and grow.

I've been involved in nuclear non-proliferation for more than half my life. And I'll admit: when I first started, I thought some day, I'd see a world free of nuclear weapons. I don't think that anymore. But I still believe this cause is worth fighting for. And that hope isn't naïve, it's necessary.

Because without it, without hope in the face of overwhelming odds, we wouldn't see new treaties written, old arsenals destroyed, and critical bodies, like PNND formed. We wouldn't see young people dreaming, marching, campaigning for a safer world. We wouldn't see folks of every political stripe coming together to say that a nuclear war must never, ever be fought.

A few months ago, I visited Kyiv. By then, Ukraine had been fighting for its survival for over two and a half years; thousands had died, millions more had displaced, the prospect of a just and lasting peace had, to me, all but disappeared. And yet, speaking with people on the ground, I was struck by something unexpected: radical optimism – especially around nuclear weapons. The hard-earned belief that the devastation of this war might be a wake-up call: prompting the world to finally confront the dangers of armament.

When your faith is in short supply, look to those dreamers. To progress, and those who make it possible. Most of all: look to one another. To leaders willing to choose compromise over ego. To parliaments that act as lighthouses, amidst a tempest of authoritarianism. To legislative bodies, struggling towards inclusive democracy – but refusing to give up. And to the parliamentarians not just in here, but out there, linking arms with the people in the fight against cruelty, against corruption, against kings.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Esteemed parliamentarians, we live on a tiny, miraculous, terrifyingly fragile marble of a planet. It's all we have. We are all we have. But I believe that's enough.

I believe we can issue a clarion call to action, like the one I received as a student, captivated by a man who thought us all to be *verbs, evolutionary processes, integral functions of the universe*.

I believe we can deliver a positive vision for the future, like the one I absorbed, almost through osmosis, growing up in parallel with the United Nations.

I believe we can reach out, and bring in those at the margins who have the capacity to make a difference and just need the opportunity to try.

And I believe we can plant the seeds of a future – where might is not measured in missiles, but in the strength of institutions that deliver justice, freedom, and opportunity. In democracies free of corruption, societies free of want and the next generation, free of fear.

So, let us be verbs. Let us tell our story, expand our movement, and hope that together, we can create that future. There isn't a moment to lose.

Thank you.

# Composition of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

Composition of the Preparatory Committee for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (29–31 July 2025), as per the nominations received from the geopolitical groups and the IPU Executive Committee.

The Preparatory Committee of the Summit of Women Speakers is composed of the women members of the Preparatory Committee of the Speakers Conference and, as ex-officio members, the President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and a female representative of the Bureau of Young Parliamentarians.

## President of the Preparatory Committee

Dr. Tulia Ackson President of the IPU

## Members as of 9 April 2025

Mr. Brahim Boughali	President	National People's Assembly, Algeria
Ms. Carolina Cerqueira	Speaker	National Assembly, Angola
Ms. Victoria Eugenia Villarruel	President	Senate, Argentina
Mr. Alen Simonyan	Chairman	National Assembly, Armenia
Mr. Milton Dick	Speaker	House of Representatives, Australia
Ms. Sahiba Gafarova	Chairwoman	National Assembly, Azerbaijan
Ms. Lashell Adderley	Speaker	Senate, Bahamas
Ms. Raymonde Gagné	Speaker	Senate, Canada
Mr. Zhao Leji	Chairman	National People's Congress, China
Mr. Adama Bictogo	Speaker	National Assembly, Côte d'Ivoire
Mr. Manzoor Nadir	Speaker	National Assembly, Guyana
Mr. Angelo Farrugia	Speaker	House of Representatives, Malta
Mr. Rachid Talbi El Alami	Speaker	House of Representatives, Morocco
Mr. Godswill Akpabio	President	Senate, Nigeria
Ms. Hamda bint Hassan Al-Sulaiti	Deputy Speaker	Shura Council, Qatar
Ms. Jemma Nunu Kumba	Speaker	Transitional National Legislative Assembly, South Sudan

## Representatives of the Executive Committee

Ms. Nelly Butete Kashumba Mutti	Speaker	National Assembly, Zambia
Mr. Agustín Almodóbar Barceló	Senator	Senate, Spain

## Ex-officio Members of the Preparatory Committee

Ms. Cynthia López Castro	President	Bureau of Women Parliamentarians
Ms. Nour Abu Ghosh	President	Bureau of Young Parliamentarians
Ms. Maja Riniker	President	National Council, Switzerland (President of the 15th Summit of Women Speakers)
Mr. David McGuinty	President	IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

## Representative of the UN Secretary-General

Mr. Courtenay Rattray Chef de Cabinet of the UNSG

Mr. Martin Chungong Secretary General of the IPU





29-31 July 2025 **Geneva, Switzerland**

# World Conference of Speakers of Parliament



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