



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Panel 1: Reimagining Global Systems Through Compassion

High Level Roundtable on Globalising Compassion: A Moral Framework for Justice, Equality, Peace & Sustainability. Hosted by Satyarthi Movement for Global Compassion in partnership with the Permanent Mission of the Principality of Monaco to the UN

New York, 25 September 2025

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me begin by saying how humbled I feel to be speaking on a panel in the presence of such distinguished and inspiring leaders. Please allow me to thank the organizers, and especially my friend Mr. Kailash Satyarthi, for including the voice of national parliaments in reimagining global systems through compassion.

At this moment of crisis of multilateralism and moral ambiguity, it is more important than ever that decision-makers be close to the people. As representatives of the people, parliamentarians make that key connection.

Parliaments, through their functions of law-making, budgeting, oversight and representation, are one of the key instruments for the people in safeguarding their freedoms, rights and values.

The organisation I lead, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, is the global organisation of national parliaments. It is the oldest political multilateral organisation, founded in 1889. Today, its membership is near universal, including 181 national parliaments, representing around 46,000 MPs around the world.

The IPU's slogan is *for democracy: for everyone*, and I would like to focus on this in my remarks today.

The IPU works to promote peace and democracy through political dialogue, guided by the upholding of human rights and the promotion of sustainable development for all. It also supports parliaments to strengthen their capacity. Our goal is to help parliaments to be effective and empowered, inclusive and representative, resilient and innovative, and so to better deliver for the people, *for everyone*.

Parliaments are places where democracy lives and where it must be safeguarded in word and deed.

Democracy is not perfect, and it certainly isn't mechanical, it needs the right conditions to be compassionate— it is anchored in values and should comprise inclusivity, agency, justice and solidarity.

Democracy will *survive* when society in its diversity is represented in parliament, and the rights of all are upheld. It will *thrive* when parliamentarians, the people's representatives, also demonstrate respect and compassion in the exercise of their mandate.

The IPU represents these values: it works to advance gender equality and ensure equal participation and leadership of men and women in parliament and politics. It supports youth empowerment and the participation of young men and women in parliament. We further encourage parliaments to increase the representation of and be responsive to the needs of marginalized groups, such as national minorities and

people living with disabilities. In recent years we have been focussing on supporting MPs to counter the growing wave of intolerance threatening our social fabric, including towards non-citizens.

Democracy also needs dialogue to thrive and be compassionate, dialogue that is rooted in free speech.

Dialogue is at the heart of parliamentary work and must be upheld in law and in practice. Each parliament has a debate chamber where the people's representatives meet, and their work is, at its core, discursive. Difference of opinion helps MPs to make laws and policies reflective of society in its diversity. Consultation is an important tool of MPs to ensure they remain connected with their constituents.

At times, given the frenetic news cycle and the immediacy of social media, the deliberative process can appear slow, even ponderous. However, this ability to solicit opinions from a wide range of stakeholders is what guarantees that all voices can be heard and that parliamentary decisions are taken on behalf of the whole of society. The deliberative process is the very core of the parliamentary process.

Dialogue is also at the core of *joint action*, a cornerstone of compassionate governance. Where the challenges facing us transcend country borders, parliamentary diplomacy has been emerging as an important tool to build trust, promote cooperation, share good practices, and build lasting peace.

The IPU encourages inter-parliamentary dialogue, as well as dialogue with different stakeholders and people of influence – because we are fighting for the future of one and the same planet.

To conclude, re-imagining global systems through compassion speaks to the core work of responsible and effective parliaments, to be places of and for the people, all the people – and it speaks to the mission of the IPU since 1889, as a convener, a place for dialogue and joint action – for democracy, for everyone.

The IPU gives its voice to the call for global compassion.