



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Panel discussion to commemorate the 2026 International Day to Combat Islamophobia
Organized by the Permanent Delegation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to
the UN Office in Geneva

Geneva, 16 March 2026

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

I am pleased to address you on this 4th International Day to Combat Islamophobia, on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global organization of national parliaments. The parliaments of the OIC member states are active members of our Organization.

I commend the OIC for hosting this event and for its commitment to combating all forms of intolerance and prejudice against persons on the basis of religion or belief. Islamophobia, anti-Muslim hatred, and any form of intolerance or prejudice on the basis of religion or belief are a scourge in our societies and violate our commitment, under article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to “act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”. What we are observing, at present, is a very concerning mixing of politics with religious narratives, and as so often, the victims end up being ordinary believers.

Parliamentarians wear several hats when it comes to countering hatred based on religion or belief. As representatives, MPs channel the voices of their constituencies and must keep their finger on the pulse of society. As public figures, they have the potential to strengthen – or weaken – social cohesion through their rhetoric and behaviour. And as lawmakers, they are entrusted with protecting the equal rights of all and upholding the rule of law.

In the current climate, where global peace is in decline, division on the basis of religion or belief is on the rise and minority rights are an ever-present issue, parliamentarians are called upon to be responsible leaders and lawmakers and to work towards creating more peaceful, inclusive and just societies.

At the IPU, we take this responsibility seriously and I have been personally alarmed by the rise in intolerance worldwide. I have therefore made the promotion of interfaith dialogue and peaceful societies an area of priority in the IPU in the past years, beginning with a dedicated General Debate at the 146th IPU Assembly in Manama in 2023 on *Promoting peaceful coexistence inclusive societies, fighting intolerance*.

The IPU is a convener, and we provide a platform for open and closed dialogue. In 2023 and 2025 we organized, together with the Parliaments of Morocco and Italy respectively, two international Parliamentary Conferences on Interfaith Dialogue. These Conferences brought together parliamentarians, religious and cultural representatives, civil society, the United Nations and other experts. They produced joint commitments from parliamentarians to harness intercultural and interfaith dialogue to prevent polarization and violence, foster peaceful coexistence and inclusion, and reinforce strong, rights-based institutions in full respect of the rule of law. At our Rome Conference last year, a high-level panel was dedicated to Countering hatred based on religion or belief.

We also offer our good offices as a place for closed-door dialogues and have done this in recent years for conflicts based on religious hatred. We provide a platform for parliamentarians to speak discreetly about issues that drive social tensions and political decisions, to better understand different perspectives and co-create solutions.

Education around issues of religious intolerance is also very important. Last year, we organised, together with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, a webinar series on *Parliamentarians combatting hatred based on religion or belief*, which looked at entry points for MPs to create more peaceful, just and inclusive societies, respecting international law and using the tools available.

Finally, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been involved, alongside the OIC, in meetings in Tirana and Oslo, supporting efforts to combat intolerance and see stronger implementation of Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution 16/18 from 2011 which addressed *Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief*.

At our upcoming general Assembly in Istanbul in April, we will be organising a Workshop on *Multistakeholder approaches to peace and reconciliation*, and we would welcome the contribution of the OIC to this workshop.

The IPU remains fully committed to working with our members and our partners, including the OIC, to strengthen dialogue, mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among all communities.

Thank you.