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# Speech by Dr. Tulia Ackson, IPU President

## Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations – Opening remarks

New York, 12 February 2026

President Baerbock,  
Secretary General Chungong,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to open another Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations together with the President of the General Assembly.

This flagship event provides a unique opportunity for parliamentarians to learn more about major UN issues and to provide input.

This year's hearing, Parliaments and the UN: better together, delivering for the people, is very timely: amidst major global turmoil, we will reflect on the purpose of the UN as the leading multilateral institution and its path forward.

After 80 years, the UN is being challenged on many fronts and may well need a reboot.

Despite this, my overarching message to you is clear and unwavering:

A world without the UN is unimaginable.

Let's not give in to the voices of doom, the destructive forces that want to see the UN weakened, if not gone.

To this day, the UN stands as the greatest exercise in human co-existence.

Throughout modern history, international relations were marked by chaos. There was no unified direction: nations pursued their own self-interest alone or as part of competing alliances, without a shared vision of the world and of the future.

In 1945, after a lot of suffering, and a lot of work, world leaders came to the realization that people everywhere are the same in their fundamental rights and aspirations, and that they needed a shared space where they could work together for a better world.

That's how the UN Charter was born, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The UN is not a world government. It is an Organization, a convening place where governments look for common ground on a multitude of issues that directly affect their people and the planet as a whole.

As such, the UN can only mirror the governments, and the politics, of the day.

The double standard with which rules are applied, the impunity that some governments enjoy, the misuse of force outside the boundaries of international law, and the blunt disregard of global commitments – these and other such shortcomings of the international order are imputable to the geopolitics of the moment more than to the rules and methods of work of the UN.

As they have done throughout history, big powers may well dominate the international order, but the rest of the world can work together to counteract that power within the safe confines of the UN.

The result of this balancing act may come down to a compromise, which as imperfect as it may be, is preferable to go-it-alone solutions.

Colleagues,

Nothing comes from nothing.

The politics that have taken us to the current global malaise, do not originate in this building in New York.

They come from back home, and they concern all of us.

The deep roots of our problems today can be found in economic and social policies that over several decades have generated an unprecedented degree of inequality, insecurity, and social isolation.

These ills have percolated up the political systems of many countries in the form of anger, divisiveness, and confrontation.

If we want to strengthen multilateralism and reform the UN for the better, we must begin by revisiting the policies that have characterized the last few decades of globalization, as well as the underlying assumptions of those policies.

To start with:

Let's re-think the notion that extreme competition is better at finding solutions to our common problems than thoughtful cooperation. We need a much better balance between the two, within countries as well as globally;

Let's re-think the idea that markets are self-regulating and always more effective than governments at delivering for the people. Governments must do a better job at regulating markets consistent with fundamental human rights;

Let's re-think expenditures in human development – particularly education, health, and the environmental – not as mere costs but as investments in the future that create good will and trust among the people and their governments the world over.

Let's re-think the politics of exclusion and discrimination, particularly against women, youth and the poor, which make a mockery of democracy in too many countries. Sound decision-making depends on everyone being included and able to participate fully in institutions at all levels.

Friends,

While it is governments that represent our countries at the UN, it is parliaments that oversee governments at home, ensuring that global rules are respected and commitments fully realized.

And it is parliaments that must translate international rules into domestic legislation that delivers for the people.

The Pact for the Future adopted here in September 2024 reaffirms the value of multilateral cooperation for peace and development as the only way forward for humanity, and for the UN.

Most importantly for us at the IPU, the Pact calls for a deepening of parliamentary engagement in UN processes and in the implementation of UN agreements.

With this commitment in mind, I ask each of you to do your part to help strengthen the multilateral system and the UN, while IPU does its part as the voice of parliaments at the UN.

The concrete ways and means by which we can work together are many and are outlined in last year's General Assembly resolution on Interaction between the UN, national parliaments and the IPU, copies of which are available in the room.

With regard to UN reforms, including the latest UN80 Initiative, which we'll discuss today and tomorrow, there is a lot that you as parliamentarians can do as well.

For example, you can take action in your parliament on three motions that the IPU Standing Committee on UN Affairs adopted over the past few years, namely, on gender equality in the General Assembly, on reform of the Security Council, and on electing the first woman UN Secretary-General.

At the country level, where the development impact of the UN is in full display - supporting health, education, nutrition and so much more for millions of people - you can reach out to the Resident Coordinator for policy guidance and technical assistance.

This is what it takes to deliver for the people in the years and decades ahead. There no shortage of tools and knowledge to get the job done.

The UN is here to help all of our countries for the good of humanity.

We can build on this together. Indeed, we can be better together.

Thank you.