



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.



IPU Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians

Advancing parity: Breaking the barriers of gender stereotypes and negative social norms

2 to 4 June 2026, Belgrade, Serbia

SPEAKERS AND PANELLISTS

Opening ceremony

Welcome address

Ms. Ana Brnabić, President of the National Assembly (Republic of Serbia)



Ms. Brnabić is a Serbian politician and has been the President of the National Assembly of Serbia since 2024.

She previously served as Prime Minister of Serbia (2017–2024) across three terms and as Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (2016–2017).

She has extensive experience working with international organizations, investors and public institutions in Serbia.

Introductory remarks

Ms. Snežana Paunović, Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government (Republic of Serbia)





Ms. Paunović was elected MP to the National Assembly of Serbia in 2013 and served as Deputy Speaker and as the President of the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) parliamentary group.


She is the co-founder of the Women's Parliamentary Network and has actively worked on initiatives improving women's rights and participation.

She has been a member of the Socialist Party of Serbia since 1992 and serves as Vice-President, with prior roles in its Main Board and Women's Forum.


Opening remarks

Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU	
	<p>Mr. Chungong became the first African and first non-European to be elected IPU Secretary General in 2014. He was re-elected to a third term of office, which began in July 2022.</p> <p>With more than four decades of experience and knowledge of parliaments at national and international levels, he has dedicated his professional life to promoting and building democracy worldwide.</p> <p>In 2020, he was elected Chair of the Global Board of the International Gender Champions, a network of decision-makers, male and female, who have committed to breaking down gender barriers.</p>

Mr. Milan Antonijević, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality (Republic of Serbia)	
	<p>Mr. Antonijević is a lawyer and human rights activist elected Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of Serbia on 3 December 2025.</p> <p>He is the founder of the Human Rights House in Belgrade (2011).</p> <p>He served on bodies monitoring anti-discrimination strategies and United Nations human rights recommendations and contributed to Serbia's European Union accession process. He was also the Executive Director of the Open Society Foundation of Serbia.</p>

Dr. Tulia Ackson, President of the IPU (United Republic of Tanzania).	
	<p>Dr. Ackson held the position of Speaker of the National Assembly of the United Republic of Tanzania from 2022 to 2025 after having served as Deputy Speaker from 2015 to 2022.</p> <p>She was elected President of the IPU in October 2023.</p> <p>Before entering politics, Dr. Ackson was Associate Dean of the University of Dar es Salaam's School of Law, a position she held for six years before being promoted to Senior Lecturer in 2011.</p>


Keynote address

Ms. Cynthia López Castro, Senator and President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians (Mexico)	
	<p>Ms. López Castro became a member of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies in 2018 and was elected to the Senate in June 2024.</p> <p>Elected as a local member of Congress at 28, she played a pivotal role in drafting Mexico City’s new Constitution. She advocated for a youth quota in the city’s electoral law and was one of the promoters of the constitutional reform in Mexico in 2023, advocating reducing the age at which people could stand for election from 21 to 18.</p> <p>A member of the IPU Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians from 2019 to 2021, she was the first recipient of the IPU’s Cremer-Passy Prize in 2022.</p>

Session 1

Unpacking barriers to parity: Stereotypes and negative social norms in the spotlight

Keynote address

Ms. Anda Filip, Secretary General-elect of the IPU	
	<p>Ms. Filip is the first woman and first Eastern European to serve as Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in its 13 decades of history. Elected by a large majority of IPU Member Parliaments at the 153rd IPU Assembly in April 2026, she will take office on 1 July 2026 for a four-year mandate.</p> <p>Since 2003, she has held senior positions at the IPU facilitating parliamentary diplomacy and strengthening engagement with parliamentarians worldwide. Previously, she served as a diplomat with Romania’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including as Ambassador to the Office of the United Nations and international organizations in Geneva.</p>

Panel discussion

Ms. Tanzila Narbaeva, Chairperson of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis (Uzbekistan)



Ms. Tanzila K. Narbaeva has served as Chairperson of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan since 2019. Prior to her appointment, she served as Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Chairperson of the Women’s Committee of Uzbekistan. She also headed the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan and held various senior positions within the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Ms. Narbaeva graduated from Tashkent State University with a degree in Russian Language and Literature. In 2007, she obtained a PhD in Pedagogy from the same university. In 2020, she earned a Doctor of Science (DSc) degree in Sociology from the Academy of Public Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Ms. Narbaeva speaks Uzbek and Russian. She is married and has two children.

Ms. Nahla Haidar, Chairperson of the CEDAW Committee



Ms. Haidar is a jurist with over 30 years of international service. Currently, she is serving as Chair of CEDAW. She is also a Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ).

Prior to these appointments, Ms. Haidar served in various capacities in the United Nations system, both at Headquarters and in the field, covering the areas of social development, humanitarian action, peace building and human rights.

Ms. Emma Muteka, Vice-Chairperson of the National Council (Namibia)



Ms. Muteka serves as the Vice-Chairperson of the National Council, Parliament of Namibia, where she holds one of the highest presiding roles in the upper chamber of Parliament. She is among the youngest presiding officers in the history of Namibia’s legislature, reflecting a significant shift toward youth participation in national governance.

She is the Regional Councillor for Windhoek West Constituency, representing the constituency at regional government level and ensuring that community concerns are elevated into formal decision-making structures.

Ms. Ágnes Forsthoffer, Speaker of the National Assembly (Hungary)



Before entering politics, Ms. Forsthoffer worked in the business sector as a finance and executive director. For the past 20 years, she has run her family business in the hotel industry.

Her entire life has been rich in social engagement. She has worked for local foundations and professional tourism organizations. She headed, among others, the Balaton Region Branch of the Hungarian Association of Hotels and Restaurants.

Her political involvement began in 2025. She rose from being a volunteer for the TISZA party to the position of Constituency Coordinator, and then became Vice-President responsible for building the Party's social foundations.

In the April 2026 elections, she was elected as a Member of Parliament for the Veszprém 02 constituency. In May 2026, she was elected Speaker of the Hungarian National Assembly. She is a mother of two children. She is an economist by qualification.

Ms. Sahiba Gafarova, Speaker of the National Assembly (Azerbaijan)



Ms. Gafarova is a professor and a prominent Azerbaijani state and political figure. She has been a member of the Milli Majlis since 2010 and has played an active role in both national and international parliamentary affairs. Since 2020, she has been serving as Speaker of the Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

With extensive experience in both academia and public service, Ms. Gafarova has significantly contributed to advancing gender equality and empowering women. In 2006, she worked at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at the University of Michigan while on the U.S. State Department Fulbright scholarship programme. From 2014 to 2017, she served as the Chairperson of the Gender Equality Sub-Committee, General Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Political Coordinator of the Women Free from Violence Network of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Ms. Gafarova holds a doctorate in philology.

Ms. Milana Rikanović, Head of the UN Women Office in Serbia



Ms. Rikanović is the Head of Office of UN Women in Serbia, with more than 20 years of experience leading development programmes across the Western Balkans and Central Asia. Throughout her career, she has managed complex, multi-sector programmes focused on gender equality, governance and sustainable development.

She has been a driving force behind integrating gender perspectives into Serbia's EU accession process. Her work focuses on advancing gender equality through policy reform, women's economic empowerment, ending violence against women and girls, and strengthening women's participation and leadership in public and political life.

Session 2

Advancing parity through diversity: Zoom on intersecting stereotypes and norms

Ms. Jelena Žarić Kovačević, Minister for Family Care and Demography (Republic of Serbia)	
 A portrait of Ms. Jelena Žarić Kovačević, a woman with long dark hair and glasses, wearing a white blazer over a dark patterned top. She is standing in front of a background featuring the Serbian flag.	<p>From 2012 to 2016, Ms. Kovačević served as Deputy Secretary of the Niš City Assembly and later as President of the Niš City Election Commission.</p> <p>She was a member of parliament between 2016 and 2024 and was Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs and Legislation.</p> <p>From May 2024 to April 2025, she served as Minister of Public Administration and Local Self-Government.</p>
Ms. Mabel Memory Chinomona, President of the Senate (Zimbabwe)	
 A portrait of Ms. Mabel Memory Chinomona, a woman with short dark hair, wearing a blue and white patterned blazer. She is seated at a desk with her hands clasped. To her left is the Zimbabwean flag, and on the wall behind her is a small framed portrait.	<p>Ms. Chinomona is the President of the Senate of Zimbabwe.</p> <p>After Zimbabwe attained independence and having completed her secondary school studies, Ms. Chinomona enrolled at the Speciss College where she obtained a degree in local governance. She moved to Murewa District where she worked in the Office of the District Administrator until 1989, when she resigned to join the Parliament of Zimbabwe. Ms. Chinomona was Deputy Speaker in the National Assembly from 2013 to 2018.</p>
Ms. Julieta Sierra, Member of Parliament and Member of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians (Uruguay)	
 A portrait of Ms. Julieta Sierra, a young woman with long dark hair, wearing a light purple button-down shirt.	<p>Ms. Sierra, a 31-year-old member of the House of Representatives of Uruguay, is one of the youngest MPs in Uruguay. She is a member of the ruling party.</p> <p>She chaired the Finance Committee during the first year of her term, working on the national five-year budget. She also serves on the Security and Coexistence Committee, focusing on economic policy, youth and women's issues.</p> <p>Her work focuses on addressing social and economic inequality to build a fairer society. She is a member of the IPU Bureau of Young MPs representing the Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) Geopolitical Group.</p>

Ms. Fatma Öncü, Member of Parliament and Vice-President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians (Türkiye)



Ms. Öncü held senior positions within the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), including positions in its Women's Branch and Central Disciplinary Board.

She served as Deputy Minister of Family and Social Services from 2021 to 2023.

She is currently a member of parliament for Erzurum in the 28th term of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye.

She serves on parliamentary committees on gender equality and disability rights and is the Second Vice-President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

Ms. Iqra Khalid, Member of Parliament (Canada)



Ms. Khalid was born in Pakistan and moved to Canada with her family at a young age, growing up in Erin Mills, Ontario.

She was first elected to the Canadian House of Commons in 2015 for the riding of Mississauga–Erin Mills.

She has served on the International Human Rights Subcommittee, the National Security and Intelligence Committee, and chaired the Justice Committee and Women's Caucus.

She also founded the Erin Mills Women's Council to address issues affecting women in her community.

Mr. Calixte Bloquet, Academic researcher, IPU consultant on diverse women's representation



Mr. Bloquet is a research associate at the Institute for Parliamentary Research (IPar) in Berlin.

He holds a PhD in political science from the University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne in Paris.

He wrote his doctoral thesis on gender equality issues in the French National Assembly and is working as a consultant with the IPU on the political participation of women from under-represented groups.



Session 4

Challenging online stereotypes, violence and disinformation against women in politics

Keynote address

Ms. Claudia Roth, Former Minister of State and Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media, Member of Parliament (Germany)	
	<p>Ms. Roth has been active in German politics since 1985, with a focus on human rights, development and cultural policy.</p> <p>She is a member of the German Bundestag and spokesperson for development policy for Alliance 90/The Greens.</p> <p>She served as Minister of State for Culture and the Media from 2021 to 2025. She was Vice-President of the German Bundestag from 2013 to 2021.</p> <p>She previously served in the European Parliament and held senior leadership positions within the Green Party at the national and European level.</p>

Panel discussion

Ms. Tatjana Macura, Minister in charge of gender equality, prevention of violence against women and economic and political empowerment of women (Republic of Serbia)	
	<p>Ms. Macura was a member of the National Assembly of Serbia from 2016 to 2020 and again from 2023, serving on committees on human rights, labour and child rights.</p> <p>She is a coordinator of the Women's Parliamentary Network, focusing on gender equality, violence prevention and women's entrepreneurship.</p> <p>From May 2024 to April 2025, she served as Minister without portfolio responsible for gender equality and related policies. She is President of the "Moms Rule" association and has received awards for her advocacy on mothers' and women's rights.</p>
Ms. Hamda Hassan Al-Sulaiti, Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council and Member of the Executive Committee of the IPU (Qatar)	
	<p>Ms. Hamda Hassan Al-Sulaiti currently serves as Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council. She held the same position during the First Legislative Term (2021–2025).</p> <p>She is also a member of the IPU Executive Committee and Vice-President of the Arab Geopolitical Group.</p> <p>Ms. Al-Sulaiti has held numerous positions within the Qatari Ministry of Education and Higher Education.</p>

Ms. María del Carmen Alva Prieto, Member of Parliament and Member of the Executive Committee of the IPU (Peru)



Ms. Alva Prieto is a member of the Congress of the Republic of Peru, Vice-President of the IPU Executive Committee for the Latin American and the Caribbean (GRULAC) Geopolitical Group and member of the Executive Board of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (PARLATINO).

Ms. Alva Prieto chairs the Special Committee on Justice System Reform of Peru of the Peruvian Congress. She is the former President of the Congress of the Republic of Peru and the Foreign Affairs Committee. She is a lawyer with a wealth of experience in administrative management, pension, labour, and functional affairs within the public sector.

Ambassador Marcel Peško, Head of the OSCE Mission to Serbia



Mr. Peško is a diplomat specializing in security, conflict prevention, disarmament, hybrid threats and cybersecurity. Before leading the OSCE Mission to Serbia, he served as OSCE Special Representative and Project Coordinator in Ukraine.

In 2020, he became Slovakia's first Ambassador-at-Large for countering hybrid threats, cyber threats and digital policy issues. He served as Slovakia's Ambassador to the OSCE in Vienna.

Ms. Lucina di Meco, #ShePersisted



Ms. Di Meco is a women's rights advocate and gender equality expert recognized among Apolitical's 100 Most Influential People in Gender Policy.

She focuses on the impact of digital harms, gendered disinformation, women's political participation, and election integrity.

She has over 20 years of experience in international development, working with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UN Women, and other global organizations, and is currently Vice-President for Gender Equality at Room to Read.

Session 5

Gender-sensitive parliaments advancing societies free from stereotypes

Mr. Pere Joan Pons Sampietro, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, Member of Parliament (Spain)



Mr. Pons Sampietro is the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, elected in July 2025 for a two-year term.

Before becoming President, he served as OSCE PA Vice-President, Special Representative on Climate Change and the South Caucasus, and Chair of the Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment.

He entered the Spanish Congress of Deputies in 2016 as a member of the Socialist Party and served through several legislatures. Since 2023, he has been serving in the Spanish Senate for Mallorca, focusing on foreign affairs, the EU, development and economic issues.

Ms. Petra Bayr, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Member of Parliament (Austria)



Ms. Bayr is the current President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

She has been a member of the Austrian National Council since 2002 and Chairperson of the National Council's Committee on Foreign Affairs since 2025. She is also a member of the Austrian delegation to the IPU.

Ms. Bayr has been fully involved in numerous civil society organizations, some of which she founded herself.

Ms. Hadija Murangwa Ndangiza, Senator (Rwanda)



Ms. Murangwa Ndangiza was elected Senator in the Parliament of Rwanda in October 2019. She is currently the Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs, National Unity and Security Commission. From May 2021 to August 2024, she was the Vice-Chairperson of the Rwandan Women Parliamentary Forum.

Before joining Parliament, Ms. Murangwa Ndangiza worked in the private sector. She has massive experience in legal practice and tax advisory matters. She worked as a consultant for a number of donor agencies, such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank Group, TradeMark East Africa, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF). She also worked with the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Rwanda, the Rwanda Revenue Authority (RRA) and the National University of Rwanda (UNR).

Ms. Murangwa Ndangiza holds an LL.M. from McGill University in Montreal, Canada (2003).

Mr. Jonathan Murphy, Head of Programme, Political Participation and Representation, INTER PARES



Mr. Murphy is an internationally recognized expert in democratic development and parliamentary strengthening.

Over the past 20 years, he has worked with more than 40 parliaments worldwide and consulted for the United Nations, World Bank and European Union.

His career highlights include leading UNDP constitutional support in Tunisia and an EU-UNDP parliamentary reform project in Ukraine.

Ms. Agata Walczak, Democratic Institutions and Processes Specialist, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)



Ms. Walczak is the Democratic Institutions and Processes Specialist at UNDP, where she provides policy and technical support to Country Offices and leads multi-country parliamentary development initiatives.

She previously worked with UN Women on advancing gender-responsive and inclusive climate action and served as focal point for women's political participation in Asia and the Pacific.

Session 6

Leadership and culture change to combat stereotypes: Learning from other sectors

Keynote address

Ms. Matilde Mordt, United Nations Resident Coordination in Serbia



Ms. Mordt has over 35 years of experience with the United Nations and has served as UN Resident Coordinator in Serbia since June 2024.

Before this role, she worked with the UNDP in Latin America and New York, and consulted for UN agencies, the EU and development banks.

Her work focuses on sustainable development, poverty reduction, environment and climate change policy.

Panel discussion

Ms. Adrijana Mesarović, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy (Republic of Serbia)



Ms. Mesarović built a 17-year career across banking, the private sector and public administration, specializing in finance, infrastructure projects and financial consolidation.

She served as Assistant Mayor of Novi Sad for finance and later as a member of the City Council responsible for budget, finance and investments.

Since May 2024, she has been serving as Minister of the Economy, and since November 2024 as Minister of Internal and Foreign Trade. She also chaired the Managing Board of the Bankruptcy Supervision Agency.

Ms. Begoña Lasagabaster, Director for Gender Equality, UNESCO



Currently Director of the Gender Equality Division at UNESCO, Ms. Lasagabaster was previously UN Women's Representative to Tunisia, Libya and Lebanon.

She started her career in the European Parliament in Brussels, was a lawyer in Spain and a member of the Congress of Deputies in Madrid (1996-2008). She worked on women's leadership and political participation at the United Nations Development Fund for Women and UN Women in New York.

Mr. Aleksandar Vlahović, President, Serbian Association of Economists



Mr. Vlahović is President of the Serbian Association of Economists and owner of AV Holding and UHY Revizija.

He has held leadership and advisory roles in banking, insurance and regional business organizations, including Erste Bank and the Vienna Economic Forum.

He was also a member of the Serbian National Assembly from 2004 to 2012 and chaired the Committee for International Economic Cooperation.

Mr. Soufiane Adjali, UNHCR Representative in the Republic of Serbia



Mr. Adjali is a jurist with more than 30 years of experience working with the United Nations and various international organizations.

Since joining the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1996, Mr. Adjali has held a wide range of positions in International Protection, in Oversight (Inspector General Office in the Executive Office of the High Commissioner), and in Management of Operations, as well as serving as Liaison/Representative of the High Commissioner in operations across the Americas, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Mr. Adjali has been leading UNHCR operations in Serbia since February 2023.

Ms. Samah Hadid, Musawah



Ms. Hadid is a women's rights advocate based in the Middle East and the Global Executive Director of Musawah.

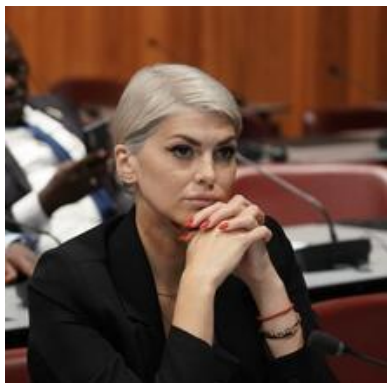
She has advised UN agencies and governments on gender equality, human rights and development policy.

She is also a commentator and writer featured in media outlets including CNN, *The Independent*, *Asia Times* and Al Jazeera.

Closing session

Presentation and adoption of the Conference outcome document

Ms. Ivana Stamatović, Member of the Bureau of Young Parliamentarians, Member of Parliament (Republic of Serbia)



Ms. Stamatović has been a Member of Parliament in Serbia since 2023. She is actively engaged in legislative initiatives focused on local and national development, with particular emphasis on youth participation in governance, sustainable agriculture and digitalization in the public sector.

Throughout her parliamentary work, she has collaborated with government institutions, NGOs, and private sector stakeholders to advance reforms in animal welfare, food safety and public sector accessibility. She has also participated in numerous local, state and international election processes, and has represented her party in media appearances, conferences, and international forums. Prior to entering politics, she built her professional career in the private sector as an architect and business and development manager. Ms. Stamatović holds a Master's Degree in Architecture from the University of Belgrade.

Man co-Rapporteur (MP from another participating parliament)

Closing speeches

Ms. Marina Raguš, Deputy President of the National Assembly (Republic of Serbia)



Ms. Raguš is Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Serbia and Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

She has served in the Serbian Parliament for several terms and has led initiatives on digitalization and international cooperation.

A member of the Serbian Progressive Party since 2021, she also heads the Parliamentary Friendship Group with China.