12 and 13 November 2026, **Geneva, Switzerland**

IPU Global parliamentary conference on human rights

Protecting human rights in an age of disruption

Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Venue: International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Adress: Chemin des Crets 17 | 1209 Geneva | Switzerland

Organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union

BACKGROUND

In 2026, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has placed human rights at the centre of its work, recognizing the urgent need to strengthen the protection of fundamental freedoms and reinforce the role of democratic institutions.

Parliaments play a central role in this effort. Through legislation, oversight and public debate, parliamentarians help ensure that human rights commitments translate into real protection for people. They hold governments accountable, defend democratic space and give voice to those whose rights are most at risk.

To support this work, the IPU will convene a global parliamentary conference on human rights in Geneva, bringing together parliamentarians from around the world who are actively engaged in advancing and protecting human rights. The conference is intended primarily for members of parliamentary committees dealing with human rights, justice, gender equality, democracy and social affairs.

Representatives from the United Nations system, national human rights institutions, academia and key civil society stakeholders will also participate, bringing practical expertise, good practices and diverse perspectives to the discussions.

The conference will bring together several important strands of the IPU's work on human rights, including parliamentary engagement with United Nations human rights mechanisms, parliamentary responses to human rights challenges linked to artificial intelligence (AI), and parliamentary initiatives aimed at advancing the rights of children, migrants and persons with disabilities. It will also address the protection of freedom of expression and the need to safeguard the rights and security of parliamentarians themselves.

The conference is designed to be highly interactive. Sessions will follow a Davos-style format, encouraging dynamic exchanges between moderators and panellists rather than formal, prepared statements. Participants will be invited to contribute actively to the discussions, share parliamentary experiences and engage directly with fellow parliamentarians and experts. They will also be invited to exchange practical parliamentary experiences and good practices from around the world, with a focus on concrete legislative initiatives, effective oversight and stronger parliamentary engagement with international human rights processes.

Interpretation in English, French, Spanish and Arabic will be provided.

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 12 November 2026

08:00–09:00 **Registration of delegates**

09:00–09:15 **Opening remarks: Ms. Anda Filip,** IPU Secretary General

Moderator of the conference: Ms. Tanya Awad, Journalist and expert in dialogue, diversity and social cohesion

09:15–10:15 **High-level dialogue: Defending human rights – the role of parliaments today**

This high-level dialogue will bring together parliamentary leaders and representatives of the United Nations to reflect on the growing pressures faced by human rights and democratic institutions worldwide. The exchange will explore why parliamentary leadership is particularly important at this moment and highlight practical ways in which parliaments can respond to growing pressures on democratic institutions and fundamental freedoms.

Discussants:

- **Ambassador Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro** of Indonesia, President of the United Nations Human Rights Council
- **Mr. Mounir Satouri**, Chair, Subcommittee on Human Rights, European Parliament
- **Ms. Mónica Adame**, Secretary-General, Parliamentarians for Global Action
- **Mr. Michael Camilleri**, Branch Chief, Rule of Law, Accountability and Civic Space (RACS), Thematic and Special Procedures Division, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Guiding questions for discussion:

- What concrete action can parliamentary leadership take when human rights are at risk?
- What parliamentary strategy to adopt in the face of human rights emergencies?

10:15–11:30 **Turning international commitments into national action: Parliaments and the UN human rights system**

International human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review (UPR) of the United Nations Human Rights Council and United Nations human rights treaty bodies, depend on the effective implementation of their recommendations at the national level.

This session will present inspiring examples of concrete parliamentary engagement with the UPR and UN human rights treaty bodies, including parliamentary participation in national reporting processes, engagement with the review process in Geneva, legislative follow-up to recommendations and mechanisms for parliamentary monitoring of implementation. Participants will explore how parliaments can play a stronger role in bridging the gap between international commitments and national action.

Discussants:

- **Mr. Ernest Yaw Anim**, Chairperson of the Committee on Human Rights, Parliament of Ghana
- **Ms. Fabiola Campillai Rojas**, Senator (Chile), President of the Committee on Human Rights and Member of the Committee on Older Persons and Disability of the Senate
- **Mr. Reinhold Lopatka**, member of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, European Parliament
- **Ms. Juliette De Rivero,** Chief of Service, Human Rights, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Guiding questions for discussion:

- How can parliaments become systematically involved in the UPR and treaty body processes, including in the preparation of national reports, participation in the review session in Geneva and national follow-up to recommendations?

- What parliamentary mechanisms have proven effective for monitoring the implementation of the UPR and treaty body recommendations?
- How can parliaments ensure that international human rights recommendations lead to legislative or policy change?

11:30–11:45 *Coffee break*

11:45–13:15 **Human rights in the age of artificial intelligence: The role of parliaments**

Artificial intelligence is transforming societies and systems of governance, bringing both opportunities and risks for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

This session will build on the resolution adopted by the IPU at its 149th Assembly (Geneva, October 2024) entitled *The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law*. Participants will explore how parliaments can develop legislative frameworks and oversight mechanisms to ensure that AI is developed and used in ways that respect human rights and democratic values.

Discussants:

- **Ms. Sandra Gómez López**, Member of the European Parliament
- **Mr. Andy Richardson**, IPU Programme manager, Parliamentary standards
- **Mr. Tim Engelhardt**, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Guiding questions for discussion:

- What are the most urgent human rights risks associated with the rapid development of AI, and how should parliaments respond?
- How can parliaments ensure transparency and accountability in the use of AI by governments?
- How can the principles set out in the IPU resolution on AI adopted in October 2024 be translated into concrete national legislative frameworks?

13:15–14:45 *Lunch break*

14:45–16:15 **Freedom of expression on- and offline: The role of parliaments**

Freedom of expression is a cornerstone of democratic societies and a prerequisite for meaningful political participation.

This session will explore how parliaments can strengthen legal and institutional protections for freedom of expression while addressing contemporary challenges such as disinformation, online harassment, restrictions on media freedom and shrinking civic space. The discussion will draw on international standards on freedom of expression and highlight how parliamentarians can ensure that legislation regulating speech complies with these standards. It will also highlight the IPU's massive open online course on freedom of expression for parliamentarians, which supports lawmakers in understanding international standards and developing effective legislative responses.

Discussants:

- **Ms. Valentina Grippo,** MP (Italy)
- **Professor Ibrahim Salama,** Dean of the Faculty of Law and Director of the Human Rights Research and Training Centre at the British University in Egypt
- **Professor Juan Barata**, Visiting Professor at Católica University's School of Law in Porto, Portugal
- **Mr. Santiago Cantón**, Secretary-General of the International Commission of Jurists

Guiding questions for discussion:

- What legislative and institutional safeguards are most effective in protecting freedom of expression, including media freedom and freedom of online expression, while ensuring accountability for speech that is not protected under human rights law?
- How can parliaments respond to disinformation and online harassment without undermining democratic debate?

- What role can parliamentarians play in protecting civic space?

16:15–16:30 *Coffee break*

16:30–18:00 **Protecting parliamentarians: Addressing intimidation and violence in politics**

For democracy to function, parliamentarians must be able to carry out their mandate freely and safely. Yet in many countries members of parliament face intimidation, harassment, violence and other violations of their rights.

This session will focus on the work of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians which examines cases of human rights violations against parliamentarians around the world, including judicial harassment and violence.

The discussion will also highlight the IPU's research and initiatives addressing intimidation against parliamentarians by members of the public, as well as its pioneering work on violence against women in politics, including violence targeting women members of parliament. The session will also explore how parliaments can establish internal mechanisms and legal safeguards to protect members and respond to incidents when they occur.

Discussants:

- **Dr. Hannah Phillips**, Respectful Politics Policy Manager at The Jo Cox Foundation
- **Senator Boris Dittrich** (Netherlands)
- **Ms. Sarah Elago,** MP (Philippines)
- **Professor Mona Lena Krook**, Distinguished Professor, Graduate Program Director, Department of Political Science, Rutgers University, USA

Guiding questions for discussion:

- What are the most common forms of intimidation, harassment and violence faced by parliamentarians today?
- How can parliaments respond, including through legal protections and institutional safeguards, when members of parliament are targeted?
- What measures are needed to address violence against women in politics and intimidation of parliamentarians by members of the public?

Friday, 13 November 2026

09:30–11:15 **Children's rights: A parliamentary responsibility**

Parliaments play a decisive role in ensuring that the rights of children are protected through legislation, oversight and budgetary decisions.

This session will highlight parliamentary initiatives aimed at advancing children's rights and strengthening child protection systems. It will also underscore the official partnership between the IPU and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which aims to strengthen parliamentary engagement in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Discussants:

- **Mr. Ernest Yaw Anim,** Chairperson of the Committee on Human Rights, Parliament of Ghana
- **Ms. Hazel De Wet,** Deputy Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF
- **Mr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur**, member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
- **Ms. Rolla Moumné Beulque**, Programme Specialist, Right to Education, UNESCO

Guiding questions for discussion:

- How can parliaments ensure that the rights of children are systematically reflected in national legislation and public policy?
- What parliamentary tools can help monitor government compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child?
- How can parliaments ensure that the perspectives of children are taken into account in policymaking?

11:15–11:30 *Coffee break*

11:30–13:00 **Migration and human rights: The role of parliaments**

Migration presents complex humanitarian and political challenges that require responses grounded in human rights.

This session will take place in the context of the second International Migration Review Forum, the global conference reviewing progress in implementing the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which will take place in May 2026.

Participants will examine how parliaments can promote rights-based migration policies and strengthen oversight of migration governance based on existing good practices.

Discussants:

- **Dr. Vincent Chetail,** Professor of International Law and Director of the Global Migration Centre at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID) (Geneva)
- **Dr. Ibrahima Guissé**, Vice-Chair, UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)
- **Mr. Jonathan Prentice,** Head of Secretariat, United Nations Network on Migration

Guiding questions for discussion:

- How can parliaments ensure that migration policies remain aligned with human rights standards and international commitments?
- What role should parliaments play in overseeing migration governance?
- What contribution have parliaments made to the implementation of the Global Compact on Migration?
- What lessons can be drawn from the International Migration Review Forum in 2026?

13:00–14:30 *Lunch break*

14:30–16:00 **Inclusive democracies: Advancing the rights of persons with disabilities**

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) establishes that persons with disabilities are entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including accessibility, independent living, education, employment, and protection from discrimination, exploitation, and violence.

Ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, including through the implementation of the CRPD, is essential to inclusive democracies. This session will draw on the work of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and of the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, including her most recent report addressing barriers faced by persons with disabilities in exercising their rights in political life.

The discussion will also highlight ongoing work within the IPU, including initiatives under way in the IPU Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights aimed at strengthening parliamentary action to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities. Participants will also discuss how parliamentary institutions themselves can become more accessible to persons with disabilities.

Discussants:

- **Mr. Christian Lohr,** MP (Switzerland)
- **Ms. Fabiola Campillai Rojas**, Senator (Chile), President of the Committee on Human Rights and Member of the Committee on Older Persons and Disability of the Senate
- **Mr. Cyrus Engerer**, Co-director of æquitasbridge, former Member of the European Parliament
- **Ms. Lisa Jacobsen**, Associate Democratic Governance Officer, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Guiding questions for discussion:

- How can parliaments through their legislative, budgetary and oversight functions help ensure that persons with disabilities are entitled to accessibility, education, employment and protection from discrimination?
- What legislative and institutional barriers still prevent persons with disabilities from fully participating in political and public life?
- How can parliaments strengthen the implementation of the CRPD?
- What steps can parliaments take to make parliamentary institutions themselves more accessible and inclusive?

16:00–16:15 *Coffee break*

16:15–16:30 **Conference conclusions and recommendations: The way forward**

This session will present the main conclusions and recommendations emerging from the conference discussions, highlighting concrete steps that parliaments and parliamentarians can take to strengthen the protection and promotion of human rights. It will also identify opportunities for follow-up at national and international levels, including through the IPU.

16:30–16:45 **Keynote speech: Mr. Volker Türk,** United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

16:45–17:00 **Closing remarks: Ms. Anda Filip,** IPU Secretary General