Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

T +41 22 919 41 50
F +41 22 919 41 60
E postbox@ipu.org
www.ipu.org

Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland

Speech by Ms. Anda Filip, IPU Secretary General

IPU Global Parliamentary Conference on Human Rights
Protecting Human Rights in an Age of Disruption
Closing session

Geneva, 13 November 2026

Excellencies,
Honourable Speakers and members of parliament,
Representatives of the United Nations and international organisations,
Distinguished guests, dear friends,

I would first like to thank the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, for the address we have just heard. It is particularly fitting to conclude these two days with a perspective from the United Nations human rights system, whose work depends so much on what countries and parliaments do in practice.

When I opened this conference yesterday, I said that I hoped we would leave with more than a catalogue of concerns. I hoped we would identify practical ways for parliaments to defend human rights, and a renewed determination to act. We did not begin that conversation in Geneva, and we certainly will not end it here. But over these two days we have taken it further, learning from experiences around the world and identifying concrete directions for parliamentary action.

That is not because the challenges have become any less serious. The pressures on human rights and democratic institutions that brought us together remain with us. But we have seen something equally important: the knowledge, commitment and willingness to learn from one another that exist across the parliamentary community.

I have been struck, above all, by the quality of our exchanges. Our programme was ambitious, and the discussions went into considerable depth. We made a deliberate choice to use a Davos-style format throughout the conference, rather than move from one prepared statement to the next. It has worked. Discussants questioned and responded to one another; delegates brought experience from their own parliaments; and the conversation developed as the sessions unfolded.

I particularly want to recognise the part played by the delegations. You kept your interventions concise and closely focused on the issues before us. You asked pertinent questions, offered practical examples and made room for other voices. That discipline made it possible to have a genuinely interactive conference.

A few reflections stand out for me.

First, the different challenges we examined cannot be treated in isolation. Protecting freedom of expression is essential to democratic scrutiny, but the spread of disinformation and online abuse also creates difficult questions for legislators. Artificial intelligence offers real possibilities, while introducing risks of discrimination, surveillance and decisions that no one can adequately explain or challenge.

Parliamentarians themselves need protection against intimidation and violence, without weakening the openness and accountability on which democratic politics depends. These are not questions with easy answers. They call for informed, sustained parliamentary judgement.

Second, human rights must be made real for the people whose lives are affected. Our discussions on children, migrants and persons with disabilities reminded us that good intentions and legal guarantees are not enough. We need to ask whose voices are being heard, whose needs are reflected in budgets, and whether public policies work in practice. And we must be prepared to look at our own institutions. A parliament that seeks to promote inclusion should also be accessible and inclusive itself.

Third, the distance between international commitments and national action remains a central challenge. Treaties, resolutions and recommendations provide essential standards. But their value is tested in national legislation, public expenditure, oversight and access to remedies. Parliaments are particularly well placed to connect these different levels of responsibility, by questioning governments, examining progress and making sure that those affected can be heard.

Earlier this afternoon, the Rapporteur for the conference presented the conclusions and recommendations emerging from our discussions. I thank the Rapporteur for drawing together such a wide-ranging exchange into a practical agenda. There is certainly plenty for us to work on: stronger follow-up to recommendations of United Nations human rights mechanisms; more effective scrutiny of the use of AI; protection for those who exercise freedom of expression and for parliamentarians under threat; and better ways to make laws, budgets and parliamentary institutions serve everyone. These recommendations deserve to be taken seriously, adapted to national circumstances and followed by action.

At the same time, I would not want us to see this conference only as a meeting that produces recommendations. Its value also lies in the conversation itself. We have brought parliamentarians and experts together to identify challenges, explore opportunities and share good practices. We have compared approaches, tested ideas and learned from experiences that do not always resemble our own. We do not need to agree on every solution to benefit from that exchange. What matters is that it continues beyond Geneva.

The value of these two days will also be reflected in the initiatives they inspire and the changes they help bring about. I hope the ideas and experiences shared here will encourage new initiatives, strengthen existing efforts and bring parliamentarians together, including across political divides, to advance human rights. The conclusions and recommendations presented today offer valuable guidance, but it will be for each parliament to determine how best to take them forward in its own context. The IPU will remain a partner in these efforts, facilitating the exchange of experiences, supporting parliamentary action and helping to sustain the momentum generated by our discussions.
And I hope we will find ways to bring this community together again. Perhaps, in two years' time, the IPU could convene another such gathering, here in Geneva or elsewhere. It would be an opportunity not only to examine new challenges, but also to take stock: which ideas have been put into practice, what progress has been made, and where further action is needed. The conversation should continue, and it should help us learn from what happens next.

Before we close, I want to express some heartfelt thanks.

To Tanya Awad, our moderator: you have done a wonderful job. You kept the discussions moving, drew out different perspectives and gave the exchanges both rigour and a genuine human touch. Your warmth and attentiveness helped create the atmosphere in which people could speak openly and listen carefully.

To all our discussants, thank you for your expertise, candour and readiness to engage in a real dialogue. To our parliamentary delegations and all other participants, thank you for your energy, discipline and generous contributions.

I also extend our warm gratitude to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for hosting us so graciously. My thanks go to the IPU human rights team, whose dedication and

hard work made this conference possible, and to the colleagues who supported them. And a special word of thanks to our interpreters, who made it possible for this conversation to take place across languages, with all the concentration and skill that such a demanding programme requires.

Yesterday, I reminded you that political choices can weaken institutions, and political choices can renew them. The same is true of human rights protection. What matters now is what we choose to do with the ideas, relationships and commitments we take away from these two days.

Let us keep this conversation going and let us give it practical consequences. Thank you, and safe travels home.