Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

153rd IPU Assembly

Arusha,
United Republic of Tanzania
5–9 October 2026

Speech by Dr. Tulia Ackson, IPU President

153rd IPU Assembly – Closing segment

Arusha, 9 October 2026

Mr. President of the Assembly, Speaker of the National Assembly of Tanzania,
Honorable Speakers and Deputy Speakers of Parliaments,
Madam Secretary General, Mr. Clerk of the National Assembly of Tanzania,
Dear fellow parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends, dear colleagues,

I cannot begin this speech without expressing a profound sense of gratitude.

Gratitude to all the colleagues who intervened moments ago and spoke so kindly about me and my presidency. I receive your words with humility, and with the satisfaction of someone who knows that they recognize my determination to deliver on the promises I made three years ago, on this continent, when you elected me to hold this very high office.

I am also deeply grateful to all those who have accompanied me on this journey. To Madam Secretary General, I thank you very much; to Honorary Secretary General Martin Chungong, thank you; to the Members of the Executive Committee and IPU specialized bodies, to the IPU Secretariat, and to my assistants at the National Assembly of the United Republic of Tanzania, I thank you.

I want to thank the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan, and our host, the National Assembly of my home country, Tanzania, and, for the political support that made this Assembly a reality when, only months ago, it was just an idea.

A very special thank you goes to the people of Arusha and of Tanzania for their warm hospitality and dedication, which has been acknowledged by all of you. Without you, this Assembly would not have been possible. I hope that, during these days, you have made Arusha your second home.

And a very special thank you to you as well, to all the delegates who have taken part in this Assembly and in its deliberations.

In my speech at the opening of this General Debate, I said that good governance is not an abstraction. I congratulate all the delegates who have intervened in our debate, because you have indeed not merely discussed governance as an abstract concept belonging exclusively to the realm of political science. You have spoken directly of communities, of exclusion, of conflict, and of the emergence of new technologies. You have spoken of inequality. And, most importantly, you have spoken of trust.

Dear friends, dear colleagues, I believe you will agree with me that the main takeaway of our deliberations over the past few days is that good governance is intrinsically linked to the relationship between people and institutions. In this context, you have spoken of trust as the measure by which we can assess the state of that relationship. The IPU Strategy adopted in Istanbul had already identified declining trust and shrinking civic space, including threats to Members of Parliament, among the pressures that democracy and parliaments face today.

It is in this context that the declaration adopted by this Assembly, the Arusha Communiqué, is particularly important. At a time when we are witnessing democratic backsliding across the world, and when many of you have acknowledged that politicians are losing the trust of their constituents, the Arusha Communiqué puts forward a simple yet ambitious message. The solutions to the pressures that democracies are facing today do not require a transformation of our political systems, nor a magical formula.

What the Communiqué invites us to do is to return to the origins, to the basics of representative democracy.

In these challenging times, Members of Parliament find it increasingly difficult to make evidence-based decisions because of weak data, misinformation, disinformation, and the sheer speed at which they are expected to act. This somber reality is worsened by the emergence of artificial intelligence which, despite its enormous potential, can facilitate the spread of misinformation and disinformation. We know this.

The Arusha Communiqué invites us to go back to our communities, to go back to the grassroots. Let us listen more closely to our fellow citizens and find, in their lived realities and through consultations, the data we are struggling to find today to build a more inclusive future.

Colleagues, another powerful idea put forward by the Communiqué is that representation is not simply about speaking for people. It is about ensuring that their realities inform the decisions taken in our chambers. A representative of the people makes sure that laws, budgets and oversight reflect the lived experiences, aspirations and frustrations of the communities they serve.

This takes us, once again, to trust - the very foundation upon which representative democracy is built. Trust cannot be taken for granted. Trust is earned every day of our civic life, well beyond the moment, every few years, when citizens go to the ballot box.

This, in turn, leads me to speak about accountability.

The Arusha Communiqué, colleagues, highlights that accountability and integrity are democratic necessities. Political institutions that are not held accountable when they cease to serve the common interest cannot be trusted. It is then that democracy weakens, and our societies become more vulnerable to polarization, hate speech and the many other forces that divide us. This, for its part, reinforces the pressures on democracy, creating a vicious circle that threatens peaceful coexistence and hinders the prosperity of our societes.

Parliaments, colleagues, must prevent corruption, uphold integrity, strengthen oversight and demonstrate that public engagement leads to tangible change. People must see that when they speak, they are heard, and that being heard can make a difference tomorrow.

The Communiqué, colleagues, also calls on us to make our parliaments more open and inclusive, an idea that aligns with the IPU Strategy. It reminds us that parliaments must mirror the societies they represent; societies of women and men, young and old, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees, stateless persons, rural communities, urban peripheries and all those whose voices have too often been excluded from decision-making. I wish to emphasize that good governance cannot be understood without a specific reference to persons with disabilities. The IPU has been working on inclusive social development and on the rights and empowerment of persons with disabilities. In the same spirit, during this Assembly the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights has approved a resolution on *Inclusive social development for all: Parliamentary strategies to promote the rights and empowerment of people living with disabilities.* I invite all of you to have a look at its text.

Dear friends, dear colleagues,

Parliaments need to bring the lived realities of people to all levels, including the international level. As I draw my presidency to an end, I believe that our deliberations reiterate the message that the IPU has

long been advocating for: a more representative multilateral system, in which parliaments can play a greater role in bridging the gap between international decision-making and the realities of the people who ultimately bear the consequences of what is decided in negotiation rooms and in the capitals of the world.

For decades, we have argued that international policies, like national policies, cannot be designed without listening to people.

Assemblies are always powerful examples of how parliaments are bridge institutions that bring to the international level different regional lived realities and socio-economic contexts.

Some greatly influencing forces in international politics argue that it is our differences what define us. That we should pay more attention to what makes us different than what we share. That world politics need to be understood as a zero-sum game where the interests of the strongest prevail over those of the weakest.

If I have learnt something in the past three years of my presidency, dear friends and dear colleagues, is that does not need to be the case.

The other day, between meetings, I was reflecting on the nature of human cooperation. I remembered how, not far from bustling Arusha, rural communities use cowhide to make drums – some of which you saw yesterday.

Once the skin has been prepared, two people pull in different directions to create the tension against which the music of our ancestors later resonates.

This captures what I believe must be our working ethic. We must carry back home the message that diverging interests and opinions do not necessarily prevent us from working together for something that benefits everyone. Two people must pull in different directions to create that instrument. If they pulled in the same direction, they could not create it. In Kiswahili we say *kila mwamba ngoma, ngozi huivuta kwake.*

These craftsmen are not pulling against one another for the sake of conflict. They are pulling with purpose, attached to the same skin, committed to creating something greater than either could create alone.

This is what we ask you to do here, in IPU Assemblies. We do not ask anyone to surrender their interests, their identity or their convictions. We ask to remain willing to work together, despite our differences, in pursuit of a common goal.

Let us not be afraid of divergence. Let us not be wary of difference. Differences do not weaken our coexistence. They enrich it. Here in Tanzania, in our communities, we say *umoja ni nguvu*, which roughly translates in English as “unity is strength”. Even when we pull in different directions, it is unity of purpose that makes us strong. It is doing things together that brings change. It is collective action that can transform our world. I invite you to take this message back home so that it inspires your parliamentary work.

Dear friends, dear colleagues,

As this speech draws to an end, so does my Presidency. Your reflections on trust and on the need to listen have made me think about the past three years of my presidency.

Because international organizations such as our dear IPU are also founded upon the trust that Members place on us. Our work needs to remain grounded on the realities of our Member Parliaments, and me, as President, have done my best to go back to your national parliamentary communities, to meet with you

during major IPU events, providing spaces and opportunities to listen to you. Throughout my mandate, I have tried to listen to your priorities, to your concerns, and to your aspirations.

When engaging with countries affected by conflict, I have always tried to be impartial, to listen to all sides, and to remain a messenger of peace. And when this proved challenging to do, I remained committed to the values that 138 years ago our Founding Fathers set out to inspire our Mission.

As my presidency draws to a close, I leave this role with profound gratitude because what I may have accomplished I have not done alone, but together., with you.

Allow me, by the way of example, to enumerate some of the milestones that we have achieved in the last three years- I have chosen just five:

- We introduced the special accountability segment, because it is in the translation of IPU resolutions to national actions where the true transformative power of the IPU lies
- We amended the IPU Statutes and Rules to formalize the position of the IPU Vice-President as a true deputy of the President
- I delivered on my promise to strengthen the voices of young MPs within the IPU by lowering the age threshold for young MPs to under 40 years of age.
- And we also amended the Statutes and Rules to set gender parity in the IPU as our collective goal. I am happy today as the Gender Partnership Group announced that we are almost 40% today.
- We have approved the Anti-Harassment policy to protect Members and Staff during Assemblies.

Dear colleagues,

As I bring these remarks to a close, I do so with a heart full of gratitude.

I have often said that I am deeply satisfied with what we have been able to achieve together over these three years. But no presidency is ever complete, because the work of democracy is never finished. What matters is that we leave this Union stronger, more united in purpose, and more determined to serve the people we represent. Much as I am leaving the Presidency, I will remain an Ambassador of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

I leave also knowing that I leave the Presidency in very capable hands. I wish my successor, Speaker Dick, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Australia, all the best in his endeavors as he takes the IPU to higher levels. Know, dear Milton, that I will always be ready to listen to you, to offer my advice, and to support your presidency should you need me.

Dear friends, dear colleagues,

We will meet again.

Thank you. *Asante sana*.