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For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Ms. Anda Filip, IPU Secretary General

Reykjavik Global Forum 2026

Parliamentarians for Change
"Combatting AI-enabled violence against women in politics: Parliaments at the forefront of collective action!"

Reykjavik, 15 November 2026

Madam Speaker,
Dear parliamentarians,
Esteemed colleagues and friends,

It is a pleasure to be here in Reykjavík, and an honour to open this session alongside the Speaker.

I want to thank the Parliament of Iceland and Reykjavík Global for their partnership. This is the first time that the IPU co-organizes this important parliamentary session, and I hope it is the beginning of a lasting collaboration.

My predecessor had told me about the remarkable energy of this Forum. I can already see what he meant, and I look forward to following the conversations over the coming days.

There could hardly be a more fitting place for our discussion today.

Half a century ago, in 1975, women across Iceland brought the country to a standstill by refusing to work, both in their workplaces and at home. In doing so, they made visible something that society had long taken for granted: the central role of women, and the inequalities they continued to face.

It was an extraordinary demonstration of collective determination.

Today, Iceland is among the world's 15 leading countries for women's parliamentary representation, with women holding 46 per cent of seats in the Althingi.

But perhaps one of the most important lessons we can take from Iceland's experience is that progress is never a reason to stop. It is a reason to keep going.

That is a lesson we take seriously at the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global organization of national parliaments.

We believe that democracy cannot fulfil its promise while half the population remains far from equal participation in the decisions that shape our societies.

And we still have a long way to go.

Women hold just 27.5 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide. That is barely two percentage points more than five years ago. Progress towards parity has nearly stalled.

Last year, at our Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians in Mexico City, parliamentarians from around the world came together to set a more ambitious course.

They adopted a Plan of Action for Gender Parity in Parliaments that has become an integral part of the IPU's work.

It calls for parity in three dimensions: parity in numbers, parity in influence and power, and a parity culture.

Because having numerical parity is only the beginning. Women must also be able to lead, shape political agendas and exercise real influence, in institutions free from discrimination, harassment and violence.

And we must walk the talk.

At the IPU, we have strengthened women's representation in our governing bodies and introduced parity as the goal in the Organization. We are holding ourselves to the standards we ask others to meet.

But we cannot speak of parity without speaking of safety.

Our recent research across five countries found that 76 per cent of women parliamentarians and 68 per cent of men surveyed had experienced violence from members of the public. Women are particularly targeted by gendered and sexualized attacks.

AI has made this threat even more disturbing. Women are often targeted simply for being politically active. Photographs can be turned into sexualized deepfakes in minutes, then spread far beyond control.

The images are fabricated. The humiliation, fear and damage are painfully real.

It is a human rights issues but not only that. When violence determines who feels able to participate, democracy loses it cannot afford to lose.

This is why addressing violence against women in politics is inseparable from our pursuit of parity and of genuine democracy.

Parliaments have a key role to legislate, allocate resources, exercise oversight and ensure that their own institutions offer protection and accountability.

But they cannot do this alone.

Technology companies have responsibilities for the safety of the users of their products and platforms. Civil society brings invaluable perspectives on real life experiences and legal and policy gaps. Researchers help us understand emerging risks and the effectiveness of our responses.

And because these threats cross borders, our cooperation must also reach across jurisdictions.

Today in Reykjavík you have an opportunity to share experiences across sectors and identify how your efforts could reinforce one another.

I hope these exchanges will not end as our session concludes. Some of the most valuable conversations may continue in the corridors of this Forum, and develop as we return home.

Because ultimately, what matters is what we carry from here into parliaments, institutions, companies and communities.

Fifty-one years ago, the women of Iceland showed what becomes possible when people come together with a common purpose.

That spirit of determination, solidarity and action is just as relevant today. I hope it will guide our discussions.

Thank you.