



# 141<sup>st</sup> IPU Assembly

**Belgrade (Serbia)  
13-17 October 2019**



*Check against delivery*

## **Ms. Maja Gojkovic Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia**

**Honourable President Vučić,  
Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Serbia,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished President of the IPU Cuevas Barron,  
Honourable Secretary General Chungong,  
Esteemed parliamentarians,**

It is my honour and privilege to wish you welcome to the 141<sup>st</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Hospitality is exceptionally important in Serbia! We did our best to ensure all delegations enjoy their stay here. I believe our open, cosmopolitan Belgrade will conquer your hearts.

I would like to thank everybody on this occasion for accepting Serbia's application to host this event. I would especially like to send words of thanks to President Gabriela Cuevas Barron and Secretary General Martin Chungong for whole-hearted support and trust in the organisation of this session.

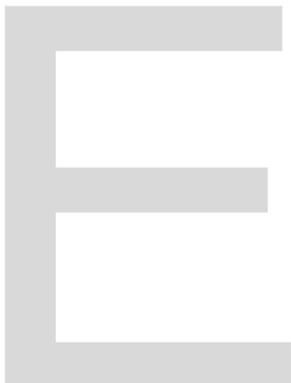
I can proudly say that tonight with us we have delegations coming from more than 149 countries, 72 Speakers of Parliaments and over **1821** delegates.

Thank you all for coming!

It is also my honour that Belgrade is the host for the jubilee - 130 years since the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the oldest and largest parliamentary family, was established.

It has been 56 years since Belgrade hosted the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. All those years ago in 1963 we hosted delegations from 59 countries with a total of 500 members. Tonight there are four times more of us, which speaks volumes about how much parliamentarians have worked on spreading the environment of respect and trust in our parliamentary community all over the globe. In the days ahead, celebrating the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it is paramount that we send a message conveying the unique spirit of this Union and the importance of inter-parliamentary cooperation.

We are gathered here to reaffirm existing bridges of cooperation and build new ones. We are here in the country of Nobel prize winner Ivo Andrić who wrote that bridges "show the place where humankind encountered an obstacle and did not stop before it, but overcame and bridged it the way humankind could, according to understanding, taste and circumstances." Therefore it is up to us today, on behalf of the people we represent, to encourage our Governments to build bridges of cooperation, rather than tear them down.



**#IPU141**

In these complex times, parliamentary diplomacy is of essential importance, and when traditional diplomatic mechanisms are lacking it is the only instrument of support to international dialogue.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union has a long tradition and immeasurable experience, coupled with the knowledge and the desire to adapt to modern challenges. Hence, we must strengthen cooperation inside our organisation as it has shown for decades to be a good and firm foundation to parliaments across the globe in facing ever-shifting challenges.

I am convinced that our generation of parliamentarians will be able, through dialogue and wise policy making, to find important mechanisms to preserve world peace, and that the Belgrade Assembly will profoundly contribute to that cause.

Serbia has remained dedicated to the values and goals of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for as long as 128 years, when the Kingdom of Serbia joined the community of parliaments in 1891.

Our parliamentary democracy developed alongside this membership through different legislatures and generations, so that today our National Assembly could become a role model to other parliaments across the globe.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our pleasure to announce that a "Belgrade Declaration" will be adopted at the end of the 141<sup>st</sup> Assembly, on the topic of the general debate, Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and mechanisms, and the contribution of regional cooperation.

Special emphasis will be given during the session to marking the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I can proudly say that our country was one of the first countries that ratified this seminal international document only one year after its original adoption.

The new regional UNICEF Ambassador, who will - I deeply believe - contribute to improved care of children's rights, will be promoted on this occasion.

Gender equality and enhancing the position of women will be a separate segment of work during this session.

A panel is dedicated to this goal, to mark 40 years from the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

I am convinced that equal participation of women in society, political processes and the economy is something that will make the world a better and more humane place.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over these 130 years our parliamentary family has always been growing bigger. We are open to the possibility of receiving all United Nations member states and reach universal membership in the period ahead of us. I hope this Belgrade Assembly will encourage other countries to join us and make our family all the richer and our bridges of cooperation firmer.

It was not by accident that we selected a Pirot rug motif, an emblem of our tradition dating back five centuries, as the visual identity for this session.

According to our lore, it protects families and spreads positive energy. This motif relates to the art of conversation, always ending in agreement.

With this idea in mind, allow me to invite you to work together to connect, cooperate and showcase the art of dialogue in the coming days.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to Belgrade, welcome to Serbia, a country of big hearts and great people.

I wish you all a pleasant stay and open dialogues.

I wish you a successful 141<sup>st</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.