



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue Closing Ceremony

Rome, 20 June 2025

Mr. President Casini,
Madam President of the IPU,
Honourable parliamentarians,
Distinguished representatives of religion and belief from around the world,
Dear colleagues,

It is my honour to kick off the closing ceremony of this Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue. Over the past two days, in these magnificent surroundings, in plenary and in the panel discussions, we have heard from Speakers and members of parliament, alongside representatives of religions, beliefs, United Nations bodies, international organizations, faith-based and civil society organizations, and academia. And it has been heartening for me to hear that, for the most part, we are all mostly on the same page. We all recognize that the world faces many problems, but we all also share a steadfast hope for a brighter future, and a commitment to work towards achieving it.

I think I speak for everyone here in expressing our warm thanks to the Parliament of Italy for hosting this second edition of the Conference. The first Conference in Marrakesh was a hard act to follow, but these illustrious surroundings have provided a fitting backdrop to our deliberations on such a vital subject for the future of humankind. We thank you also for your generous hospitality and your coordination with the Vatican to organize an audience with Pope Leo XIV tomorrow. The recent loss of Pope Francis was felt not only by those of the Catholic faith but also by many others who respected his compassion and dedication to speaking up for the most marginalized and promoting human fraternity. Indeed, the theme of our Conference was inspired by the theme of this Jubilee year, as declared by Pope Francis – pilgrims of hope.

Pope Leo XIV has made it clear from the outset that peace is foremost among his priorities. And he has emphasized that peace is not merely the absence of war but a personal effort that comes from the heart. I think we can draw inspiration from the visions of both Popes and conclude that hope is a prerequisite for peace. At the IPU, we consistently emphasize the importance of dialogue in building peace. But dialogue only works if the participants enter into it from a position of hope and trust. And it only works if it is inclusive – of women, of young people, and of those in marginalized or vulnerable situations. Dialogue relies on finding a connection between the interlocutors – a mutual understanding, common ground or a shared perspective. I hope that these two days have provided an opportunity for everyone here to find those links and build those bridges.

In the coming year, the IPU membership will be formulating its next five-year Strategy, for the period from 2027 to 2031. The bedrock of the IPU's work will always remain parliamentary diplomacy and dialogue, and I am sure that the importance of the cooperation between parliaments and representatives of religions, beliefs and faith-based organisations, as exemplified by this Conference, will continue to be recognized by the whole IPU membership. We have consistently stressed that parliaments cannot work in a vacuum – they need to reach out to a whole ecosystem of stakeholders around them – and religion and belief leaders and organizations are a key piece of that puzzle. As has been emphasized time and time again at the Conference, more than 80% of people worldwide identify with a religion.

Since the first Parliamentary Interfaith Conference in Marrakesh two years ago, we have continued to pursue our work in religious engagement on many fronts. In addition to the second part of the

Parliamentary Report on Religion and Belief, which we have launched here in Rome this week, we have organized several webinars and side events at our Assemblies, and are even starting to dip our toe into the world of podcasts – this week our first podcast on interfaith dialogue went live as part of the IPU on Air series, featuring two MPs and interfaith champions you have also heard from at this Conference. And throughout all our work on peace, security and parliamentary diplomacy, we are at pains to emphasize not only the religious dimensions of conflict but also the potential role of religious engagement in fostering peace.

In addition to building bridges and fostering dialogue, I hope that this Conference will also have provided impetus for the parliamentarians present to take concrete actions at home. The Rome Communiqué, which will be presented to you shortly, sets out a series of such actions. Building on the commitments outlined in the Marrakesh Communiqué from our first Interfaith Conference, and inspired by the spirit of this Jubilee year, and the different voices we have heard over the past two days, it covers subjects as diverse as adopting legislative provisions to protect freedom of religion and counter hate speech, enhancing parliamentary mechanisms for interacting with religious and faith-based actors, supporting peace education, ensuring the meaningful engagement of women and youth, and actively engaging in parliamentary and multi-stakeholder diplomacy.

I hope that our partners from outside parliaments can also draw lessons from the Communiqué and take corresponding actions within their communities and organizations. Above all, I hope that everyone here will leave this Conference with a feeling of hope and inspiration for the work ahead to nurture and strengthen their respective constituencies and the links between them, in the interests of peace and prosperity for all.

Thank you.