



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# 139<sup>th</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 14 – 18.10.2018

## Opening address by the IPU President Gabriela Cuevas Barron

Geneva, 15 October 2018

Director-General of the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN),  
Ms. Fabiola Gianotti,  
IPU Secretary General, Mr. Martin Chungong,  
Honourable Speakers of Parliament,  
Members of parliament,  
Special guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address you all here today in Geneva and I am delighted to be presiding over an Assembly that has chosen to debate the age of **innovation and technological change** as the theme of its General Debate. This is an issue that is not only very topical, I would say it is vital for understanding our future. In an age of the fourth industrial revolution, where the buzz words are “artificial intelligence” and a robot called Sophia, it is our duty as policymakers and lawmakers to address this topic in all its aspects.

I would like to recognize Dr. Gianotti, an eminent nuclear physicist who made history by becoming the first woman Director-General of CERN. In a very male-dominated world of science, you will agree that is no small feat. So welcome, Madam, and we look forward to hearing your words of wisdom very soon.

Ladies and gentlemen,

2018 continues to be a landmark year for migration and refugees. It is the year when the two Global Compacts – one on migration and the other on refugees – will be adopted by the global community. As a cross-cutting and recurrent theme throughout 2018 for the IPU, the IPU Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights will be adopting a resolution on **Strengthening inter-parliamentary cooperation on migration and migration governance in view of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** at this session.

This Assembly will also feature other anniversaries or special events, such as the **70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights**. Human rights are at the core of the IPU's work, and have been championed by its Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, a unique body that defends the human rights of parliamentarians across the world. Befitting of this special anniversary, a **Handbook for Parliamentarians on Freedom of Expression** will be launched at this Assembly.

Fellow parliamentarians,

#IPU138

Reverting to the theme of our **General Debate**, I encourage you to embrace change and innovation, science and technology and to place these at the service of the policies you formulate and the laws you pass. As politicians, we must acknowledge that snail mail and traditional media are being overtaken by 24-hour news channels, social media and instant means of communication. We live in a world of instantaneous news and information obtained at the click of a button with all of its advantages and drawbacks.

You, as representatives of your constituents, must keep up with the times and engage the youth on social media, mobile apps and other new information and communication technologies (ICTs). You must not remain mere spectators and let technology take over in an unbridled manner. On the contrary, it is your responsibility to set ethical limits on science and technology and set up a legal framework to ensure that machines do not take over to the detriment of humans.

You will no doubt have noticed a buzz in the air. This is due to the presence of a **Knowledge Fair** outside in the reception area of this Conference Centre. It is just what its name implies: a marketplace of ideas, knowledge and creativity and a number of scientists from CERN, the EPFL (Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne) and Raspberry Pi are waiting to talk to you about their very exciting work .... You will also see over the next few days a number of students walking around the centre and getting to know more about the IPU and the world of science. Through this endeavour, my dear fellow parliamentarians, we are aiming to bridge the gap between the political and scientific communities and to open up the organization more to young people, thus attracting their energy and talent.

I encourage you to do a walk-about, as you do in your respective constituencies, and get a feel for what these exhibitors have to offer. In a bid to make the Assemblies more **dynamic and interactive**, in addition to the regular meetings, we have organized a number of **side events** on a variety of themes, from **sexual harassment** and **terrorism and violent extremism, to fake news** and **nutrition**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you can see, we have a very rich and varied agenda and I look forward to hearing your views on all of these important matters.

As part of these efforts to keep up with the times and to project ourselves as a modern and relevant organization, the IPU will also have to take a reality check and a long, honest look at itself in the mirror. We need to update and innovate the way we do business. That is why we are endeavouring to make our Assemblies greener, more interactive and more in tune with the times, with MPs in the forefront of all activities and events. We need to move away from the traditional rhetoric and speak up about the issues that really matter to our constituents so as to improve their present reality and their future.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and concrete outcomes that we can take back home with us to our respective countries and leave behind as a tangible legacy to those who come after us. I also urge you to use this unparalleled platform for dialogue and diplomacy to reach out to the delegation next to you or behind you in this plenary hall, to network and to make the most of this truly unique opportunity to bond and to share experiences.

I now declare the 139<sup>th</sup> Assembly open.

Thank you.