



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Address by IPU representative

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**High Level Meeting of the UN
General Assembly on
Peacebuilding and Sustaining
Peace**

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

When Colombia's President Juan Manuel Santos - who spoke here on Tuesday - received the Peace Nobel Prize in 2016, he said in his speech to the Nobel committee: *"I found a paradox. While many who have not suffered the conflict in their own flesh are reluctant to accept peace, the victims are the ones who are most willing to forgive, to reconcile, and to face the future with a heart free of hate."*

It is important to listen to the victims; to their ability to reconcile. Without dialogue between present and former antagonists reconciliation remains impossible; peace remains unsustainable.

But of course: **Antagonisms and divergences are inevitable** in a society. This is why it is so indispensable to have **platforms** to address these divergences constructively – without violence and, if possible, with a view to find a compromise.

On the national level, the most prominent and influential platforms for this dialogue are usually the **parliaments**. For this reason, I can hardly imagine a better ally for the sustaining peace agenda of the UN than national parliaments.

As the UN moves forward in re-organizing itself to better prevent conflicts around the world, it is a matter of concern that parliaments and parliamentarians are **often missing** from key UN debates and reports.

It sometimes seems that these debates are more focused on the partnership with civil society and the private sector, even though Parliament is the central institution through which the will of the people is expressed.

But **parliaments have a key role to play** in sustaining peace, be it helping to prevent conflicts or contributing to reconciliation in post-conflict situations.

The **Inter-Parliamentary Union was itself** founded to promote dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict.

Sustaining peace falls under the mandate of the IPU Standing Committee on Peace and Security which prepared a resolution on *Sustaining peace as a vehicle for achieving sustainable development*.

This resolution has been facilitated by Senator Rojas from Mexico and myself, from Switzerland, as co-rapporteurs. It has been adopted unanimously by the **138th IPU Assembly in March 2018** and is a good illustration of what Parliaments and

parliamentarians can do to help achieve sustaining peace and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The resolution highlights the importance of **national ownership** and leadership as well as the **need for inclusivity** in peacebuilding and development. It therefore calls for greater **partnerships** and a meaningful involvement of parliaments in the implementation process since they guarantee inclusive decision-making processes, sponsor active dialogues within communities and work with civil society to oversee political processes.

In parallel, the resolution calls on Parliaments to **make use of their relevant** law-making, oversight, budget, representative and elective **functions** to facilitate adoption of enabling legislation, including key budget laws and to monitor and ensure efficient implementation of the sustaining peace and development agendas.

The IPU, in its own right, helps parliaments mature into robust and democratic institutions, thus supporting peace-building.

The IPU makes use of **parliamentary diplomacy** to help defuse tensions and resolve a conflict by peaceful means before it spirals out of control. To that end, the **IPU offers its good offices** and provides a neutral venue for members of parliament to exchange views and experiences, and discuss conflicts within and between countries.

Moreover, the IPU assists parliaments in dealing with various threats to security and to take action on counter-terrorism and disarmament. It does so by raising awareness and encouraging an exchange of experiences among parliamentarians; by facilitating the **sharing of good** legislative and regulatory **practices**; by **providing technical** assistance to strengthen the legislative, oversight and representative capacities of parliaments and by providing parliaments with tools to enhance parliamentary contribution to peace.

Sustaining peace and development are long-term, nationally-driven processes that focus on strengthening the attitudes, structures, and institutions associated with peace and development. A key characteristic of sustaining peace is **inclusiveness** - and who would be better suited than parliaments to provide it, given that parliaments are the forums where the different needs of society are addressed.

In **conclusion**, parliaments have a lot to offer when it comes to sustaining peace. I therefore ask all the relevant sustaining peace actors to keep parliaments in mind - in turn I can promise you that we parliamentarians will keep you - all the other actors - in mind, too.