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#6WCSP

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A world in turmoil: Parliamentary cooperation and multilateralism for peace, justice and prosperity for all

We, Speakers of Parliament from around the world, have come together to take stock of the many crises that engulf the world today, and to reaffirm the fundamental principles that must guide our future parliamentary action.

As Speakers, we can help inspire public debate, uphold democratic practices in our parliaments and engage in parliamentary diplomacy to advance peace and understanding among peoples. Above all, we can exercise moral leadership and serve as role models for our fellow parliamentarians and citizens at large.

A world in turmoil

We note with concern that conditions around the world are not significantly better today than when we last met, in 2021, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, almost everywhere globally, we observe a pervasive sense of malaise and anxiety. This reflects, in our view, a lack of peace, understood not only as freedom from conflict but also as the fulfilment of basic human needs at the individual and societal level.

Particularly alarming is the accelerated erosion of multilateralism and the growth of self-seeking, zero-sum perspectives that overlook the complex realities on the ground. Progress towards a peaceful world and the transformative vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its accompanying Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which inspired our past declarations, has all but stalled. In particular:

- We are witnessing a growing trend for disregard of the rule of law and increased threats to democracy, both nationally and internationally.
- Conflicts within and between countries, as well as civilian casualties disproportionately affecting women and children, have grown in number and scope. Unchecked, these conflicts have created circumstances in which violations of international humanitarian law and human rights are occurring with greater frequency. Terrorism and violent extremism remain prevalent features of the global landscape.
- Rising nationalism and the implementation of protectionist policies are eroding the spirit of collaboration and cooperation among nations. This trend poses a threat to global interconnectedness and challenges the principles of cooperation and solidarity that underpin multilateralism.

¹ The term “Speakers of Parliament” is considered to encompass all presiding officers of unicameral national parliaments or of either chamber of bicameral national parliaments, regardless of their actual title (“Speaker”, “President”, “Chairperson”, etc.).

- Increasing disinformation and the misuse of global communication platforms has led to the distortion of public perception and decision-making processes. This phenomenon has the potential to sway elections, policy decisions and international relations.
- Progress in promoting inclusiveness, accessibility and support for people with disabilities in political offices has been slow, leading to a lack of representation and participation, which can perpetuate policies that inadequately address the needs and rights of the disability community.
- The number of forcibly displaced people is at an all-time high.
- An alarming resumption of the nuclear arms race with increasing threats of weapon use and the erosion of disarmament norms constitutes an existential risk to human survival.
- Politics has grown more fractured: too often opposing parties are depicted as enemies and common ground among political factions is too hard to find. The role of evidence-based decision-making and fundamental scientific truths is being called into doubt.
- The planet's carrying capacity, which determines the limits of sustainability, continues to be strained, with no end in sight. The world is facing a climate emergency, with most of the burden borne by developing countries and people in vulnerable situations.
- Poverty is again on the rise and inequalities are deepening.
- Economic and financial power is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few, challenging principles of fairness, equality and inclusive participation. A comprehensive review of funding structures could facilitate better prospects to close existing gaps, reduce inequality, and encourage more cooperative participation among nations.
- Progress towards gender equality and the realization of women's rights is far too slow, facing resistance and regression in a number of countries.
- Intolerance towards migrants and refugees, faith-based communities, indigenous people and other people in vulnerable situations, including stateless persons, is resurgent.
- Artificial intelligence and other emerging information and communication technologies are penetrating every aspect of human existence with only limited tools to protect people and institutions.
- Young people remain extremely underrepresented in political decision-making when they, and future generations, will be most affected by the shortfall in efforts to address all these challenges.
- The existing international political and economic architecture has fallen short in responding to all the above challenges and crises.

To recover from this mix of slow progress, setbacks and emerging threats, we need to do more than simply address their main causes. Above all, we need to appeal to a basic sense of shared humanity and to work collectively towards a more peaceful, just and prosperous world that is solidly anchored in the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

As long as there is no justice and impunity prevails for the perpetrators, there will be no real peace for people experiencing exclusion, exploitation, violence, discrimination and the denial of fundamental rights and freedoms.

Key transitions toward peace, justice and prosperity

Inspired by the IPU's values and principles, as well as by the outcomes of major United Nations processes over the past few years, we conclude that building a more peaceful, just and prosperous world requires the following key broad policy transitions:

- Ensuring the complete and consistent observance of international law and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of States and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, in a coherent and non-selective manner.
- Building strong, transparent and accountable institutions to maintain peace and justice. This includes reforming judicial systems, enhancing law enforcement, and ensuring that governance structures are inclusive and equitable.

- Prioritizing and investing in conflict prevention, as well as redefining “security” more broadly, pairing the traditional concept based on military might with the approaches of human security and common security,² so as to achieve comprehensive and sustainable security.
- Promoting the peaceful, secure, open and inclusive use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), in accordance with international law, including international human rights law, and joining efforts to prevent and combat cybercrime and malicious cyber activity by supporting global and regional cooperation, capacity-building, and responsible State behaviour in cyberspace, including through the United Nations and its specialized bodies, while respecting privacy and other fundamental rights.
- More effectively embedding the SDGs into national policies, strategies and budgets to provide an integrated approach to eradicating poverty, addressing climate change, reducing inequalities, and fostering peace, justice and prosperity.
- Shifting the current economic paradigm to a more people-centred model based on cooperation, solidarity, inclusion and sustainability. Economic models such as the paid care economy, the green economy and the circular economy, among others, need to be mainstreamed. The transition away from an economy based on fossil fuels needs to accelerate if we are to enjoy a sustainable future on this planet. Simultaneously, this shift should be carefully planned, taking into account different national circumstances and priorities. Cooperation should be the driving force of scientific and technological innovation for the betterment of humanity.
- Investing more in health, education, environmental preservation, and other public goods that benefit individuals directly. Expenditure on social programmes and public infrastructure should be seen as *investments* in the future and not merely as present-day costs. Austerity measures dictated by budget shortfalls and other financial imperatives need to be calibrated to protect the people in vulnerable situations first.
- Advancing gender equality, in law and in practice, in all fields and at all levels, especially in parliaments but also in international institutions, in civil society and in the business sector, as a necessary condition of peace, development and justice. The world cannot afford to waste 50% of its talent. Gender parity in parliaments is a key step in the meaningful transition towards achieving gender equality and respect for women’s rights worldwide. Laws, policies and budgets must be analysed and monitored through a gender lens to ensure that they are delivered equitably and support a culture of zero tolerance of discrimination and violence against women.
- Empowering young people, harnessing their perspectives and potential, building their trust in policymaking and leveraging their innovation so they can better contribute to resolving global challenges. This includes boosting the political participation and leadership of both young men and women and delivering youth-responsive public policies in all fields.
- Valuing diversity in our societies as an asset to be nurtured and protected as opposed to a threat to be feared, including by ensuring that the rights of all individuals, as recognized in international human rights law, are respected and protected. Greater inclusion of diverse experiences and the cross-fertilization of ideas and cultures, which in turn enhance knowledge, lead to innovation and facilitate the efforts of all stakeholders to navigate the complexities of this century. More awareness of our diversity can also help to build tolerance, acceptance and mutual understanding between people, communities and groups, creating the conditions for lasting peace. Migration has long been a contributor to diversity as well as development and can be appropriately managed to maximize its benefits to both destination and origin countries.
- Embracing the idea that global problems require collective action based on the realization that no single State or group of actors can tackle these global challenges alone. Multilateral engagement is the most effective way for countries to find solutions to the burning issues of our time, from nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation to climate change, global financial stability, global health, international trade, artificial intelligence and migration. Multilateral cooperation mechanisms such as the G7, G20, BRICS, OECD and others need to work in close cooperation and coordination with the United Nations-led multilateral system.

² *Human security* focuses on protecting individuals from threats of fear, want, and indignity by addressing the root causes of insecurity and human suffering; *common security* embodies the idea that no nation can achieve security alone, at the expense of another, and that the best way for countries to build security is through cooperation, reciprocity and multilateralism.

- Reinforcing the practice of democracy in our countries and in international relations, with a strong emphasis on multilateral engagement, and upholding democratic values of transparency, inclusive dialogue and promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout politics and society. Parliaments, as the core representative institution of the nation, have a special responsibility to embody democratic practices and values and ensure accountability.

Our commitment going forward

We welcome the United Nations Pact for the Future of September 2024 and its accompanying Global Digital Compact and Declaration for Future Generations as the latest effort by the global community to reconstitute multilateral order on stronger foundations, turbocharge the SDGs and find common ground on the key issues of our time.

We highlight the crucial role of parliamentary organizations and inter-parliamentary cooperation in global governance, in particular in supporting respect for the norms and principles of international law, peacebuilding and sustaining peace, human rights and sustainable development.

We note in particular Action 55 of the Pact, which calls for a deepening of the engagement of parliaments in the work of the United Nations, including its inter-governmental processes, which builds on 25 years of growing interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU. We note with satisfaction the IPU's work to help democratize global governance by opening the United Nations-led multilateral system to the input of parliaments and parliamentarians.

With this background in mind, we will work to:

- Step up efforts to build stronger and more effective multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, that delivers for the people and the planet.
- Help advance effective reform of the United Nations, including of the Security Council, as well as of the global financial architecture, for peaceful, just and inclusive societies, for achieving the SDGs and closing the financing gap for developing countries.
- Ensure a fair, open, non-discriminatory multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core, and foster a favourable trade and investment environment for all.
- Raise awareness within parliaments of major United Nations agreements such as the Pact for the Future, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, among others, so that, within each national context, commitments are implemented through law, regulations, policies and budgets.
- Encourage parliamentary oversight of the positions taken, and agreements entered into, by governments at the United Nations and other international forums.
- Share knowledge with constituents and the public at large of major United Nations agreements to support deeper national ownership and understanding of their goals.
- Ensure more active participation of our parliaments in key United Nations and other global processes in order to provide input and enhance parliamentary ownership of relevant outcomes, paying particular attention to the inclusion of all major political forces and the participation of women and young people.
- Facilitate gender equality and greater representation of youth as well as people in vulnerable situations and other underrepresented groups in our parliaments to better reflect their share of the general population and ensure their participation and influence. This includes ensuring that parliaments are safe environments free from discrimination and violence.
- Open our parliaments up to greater participation in the legislative process by civil society, the business community, the scientific community, labour unions, faith-based communities, minority groups as well as citizens at large in all their diversity.
- Strengthen trust and embrace hope for our common future through the IPU's work on interfaith dialogue.
- Pursue parliamentary diplomacy as a complement to governmental efforts in order to prevent and resolve conflict by addressing its root causes, engaging in direct dialogue with all relevant actors, and prioritizing civilian safety and respect for International Humanitarian Law.

- Recognize and promote science diplomacy as a fundamental tool for addressing the problems the world faces, informing decision-making processes and advancing diplomatic objectives more broadly. Parliaments should actively support the integration of scientific expertise into diplomatic efforts and use evidence-based approaches to create more informed policy.
- Support the prevention of arms-inflicted human suffering and ensure parliamentary oversight of commitments to disarmament and arms control measures and to non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Encourage parliamentary hearings that, inter alia, examine the root causes of conflict and insecurity, such as climate change, environmental degradation, food insecurity, disease, poverty, social exclusion and discrimination.
- Actively participate in global efforts to regulate and harness the potential of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, in order to maximize their benefits and minimize their risks.
- Support a plan of action to build digital competencies among parliamentarians and the parliamentary administration, to ensure that parliament is a modern institution that is equipped to shape our digital future, notably with regards to the ethical regulation of artificial intelligence.
- Promote inclusive and effective legislative processes, to support a culture of mutual respect, dialogue and understanding within parliamentary deliberations, ensuring that all voices, perspectives and constituencies are heard and valued.
- In parliaments where one does not already exist, consider the establishment of a parliamentary Committee of the Future to deal with emerging cross-cutting issues.

We thank our hosts, Switzerland and the United Nations Office at Geneva, as well as the United Nations Secretary-General and the President of the United Nations General Assembly, for their support of our Conference, which has been yet another demonstration of the close partnership between the IPU and the United Nations: one of the keys to making this world a better place, with pathways to peace, justice and prosperity for all.

N.B. It is recognized that due to their constitutional positions or other factors, certain Speakers cannot directly associate themselves with substantive political statements, and therefore should not be seen as indicating specific support for all sections. Nonetheless, on behalf of their chambers, they recognize the importance of the issues raised and the intentions of their colleagues in proposing particular ways forward.