



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER TO THE UNITED
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Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Senator Sergio Paez Verdugo, regrets very much that pressing political engagements in his country – Chile – prevent him from being with you today. At his request, I therefore have the honour to report to you on the outcome of the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments.

During three days last week, more than 150 Speakers of parliaments met in this very hall to discuss the growing role of parliaments in the work of the United Nations. They came with the intention of galvanising that role into a new strategic partnership between the United Nations and parliaments and pledged to build political momentum for reforms of the United Nations.

Before you, you have the declaration adopted by the Speakers at the close of proceedings, the result of a long and careful process that included extensive consultations with parliaments around the world.

The document is short and to the point, built around a single focussed message: parliaments have an essential role to play to bridge the democracy gap in international relations.

The declaration takes up the subject of United Nations reform. The text does not mince words: parliamentarians want to see the reform proposals debated and they want to see their governments acting on them now, not in five or ten years time. They want reform and they want it to be comprehensive. Reforms must recognise the intrinsic link between democracy, security, development and human rights.

The declaration calls for change and political action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to identify additional financial resources for development. It also calls for the conclusion of a comprehensive treaty on terrorism with a clear definition of terrorism, and real advances in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control issues. Frankly speaking, the stakes here are too high for the present impasse to be allowed to continue. The text also reaffirms that the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all are essential to development, peace and security.

The Speakers of Parliament want to see a stronger United Nations. They call on States, including their parliaments, to demonstrate leadership and political will to provide the United Nations with more efficient mechanisms, appropriate human and financial resources and real management reform.

Mr. President,
Distinguished delegates,

Over the last year, stimulated by the Cardoso panel's report, many parliaments have discussed how best to organize cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations. The conclusions of those debates are also reflected in the declaration. It affirms that Parliaments in all countries have a constitutional role to represent the will of the people and, on their behalf, adopt laws, including the national budget, and oversee the government. This responsibility is carried out at home, but includes a responsibility to follow closely the multitude of international negotiations that take place in multilateral forums.

Parliaments want to make sure that they are well informed of these negotiations, that they have an opportunity to debate what is being negotiated, that they can question ministers and influence the negotiating positions they are advancing on behalf of their people. And once negotiations have concluded, it is for the parliaments to ratify agreements and see to their implementation. That involves adopting or amending legislation, it involves voting budgets and, of course, it involves holding governments to account in implementation.

The declaration adds that parliaments should increase their international work in partnership with the IPU, which they consider to be a unique global parliamentary counterpart of the United Nations. The Speakers in parliament are not in support of the creation of any parliamentary assembly at the United Nations or elsewhere.

Instead, they want the IPU to mobilize expertise, which exists in parliamentary standing and select committees, and to work on issues on the international agenda. They want the IPU to facilitate the provision of more and better information to national parliaments on the activities of the United Nations. They want us to stage more parliamentary hearings and specialized meetings at the United Nations. And they want us to cooperate more closely with official regional parliamentary assemblies and organizations.

Acting in this manner, parliaments and the IPU seek to strengthen the United Nations, assist in implementing decisions taken at the United Nations, and holding the United Nations accountable to the people it serves throughout the world.

All of that represents a large agenda for parliaments and for the IPU. The Speakers came to New York with a commitment from their respective parliaments to put it into effect. They are now turning to you to seek your commitment and support for turning this agenda into a reality, including by making it possible for all members of parliaments to come to New York for meetings we organise at the United Nations.

The principle that problems must be solved through dialogue represents the cornerstone of both democracy and the United Nations. The Speakers of Parliament invite you to build on that foundation to construct a strategic partnership between the United Nations and parliaments through the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Thank you for your attention.