



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

5, CHEMIN DU POMMIER  
CASE POSTALE 330  
1218 LE GRAND-SACONNEX / GENÈVE (SUISSE)

TELEPHONE (41.22) 919 41 50 - FAX (41.22) 919 41 60 - E-MAIL [postbox@mail.ipu.org](mailto:postbox@mail.ipu.org)  
TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS : INTERPARLEMENT GENEVE

## **SPEECH BY SENATOR SERGIO PAEZ, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION, TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

New York, 21 November 2002

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing the gratitude of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the United Nations and its member States for having granted observer status to our Organisation. This decision represents an important milestone in the evolving relationship between the world organisation of national parliaments and the United Nations.

Both our Organisations were created to promote peace, security and the welfare of all nations. The IPU saw its origins in the peace movement of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is founded on a very simple principle that retains all its validity today, which is that problems confronting States should be solved through dialogue and communication, not through arms or the threat of war.

Over the years, the IPU has played a discreet but rewarding role in bringing people together. As parliamentarians, we are particularly apt at helping to solve problems by using our personal and parliamentary skills. We are often able to open up channels of communication and build bridges of international understanding when official diplomacy is unable or unwilling to do so.

The fundamental notion underlying the exercise of democracy is the respect of the other. Democratic life entails both the right to differ and the acceptance of such difference by all. The point is to recognise and accept diversity rather than to refuse it.

Parliamentary practice takes those differences and uses them to build majorities and forge agreements; we parliamentarians can therefore help assemble the national consensus that is necessary for international action.

Parliaments are, of course, made up of majorities and minorities, of parties in power and those in opposition, and it is in the fertile tensions of adversarial debate that we feel most at home. We enjoy the cut and thrust of argument, and prefer the political dialogue to the elegant consensus. We are awarded our mandates by our electors, and if we fail to live up to their expectations, we lose our seats. Such are the rules of democracy.

I mention this merely in order to point out that the Inter-Parliamentary Union will never be able to offer a consensual view on the entire range of matters that are treated by the United Nations. Nor, I hasten to add, do I believe that it will be expected of us. However, I do think that there are many areas in which the work of the IPU can be beneficial to the United Nations.

We are witnessing a momentous evolution in international relations which makes it imperative to bring ordinary people closer to the workings of multilateral cooperation and to international negotiating fora. In today's world of accelerated mass communication, where most salient national issues extend well beyond national borders, we have no other choice than to contribute much more actively to international cooperation.

That is why, two years ago, the IPU brought to this hall the Speakers of the world's parliaments. In an unprecedented summit, the world parliamentary community, at the highest level, committed itself to providing a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation.

The declaration adopted on that occasion also stated that Parliaments embody the sovereignty of the people and can, in all legitimacy, contribute to expressing their will in the international arena. This assertion underpins the first important step on the long road towards a more democratic international order.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, the world's oldest international political organisation, played a pioneering role in developing international cooperation well over a hundred years ago. Like all international organisations, it has had to adapt to the new environment in which the world operates. Like no other international organisation, it has a salient role to play in helping to make international cooperation more democratic.

We therefore welcome this opportunity to reinforce the relationship between the United Nations and national parliaments through the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Millennium Declaration recognises the need for the United Nations to work more closely with parliaments in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights, and democracy and gender issues.

That is a broad mandate by any definition. It coincides with that of the IPU, and this year's report of the Secretary-General on the cooperation between our two organisations provides a wide range of examples where the IPU has provided practical support to United Nations action in all of these fields.

As a democrat, I would like to emphasise the unique contribution the IPU can make to the promotion of democracy. Our organisation takes a holistic view of democracy that recognises it both as an ideal to be pursued and as a system of governance. Democracy aims to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual and therefore has much in common with development and social justice. It also ensures the people's participation in running the affairs of State. Any true democracy requires democratic institutions that respect the rule of law and protect human rights. It is the ambition of the IPU to promote a movement towards internationally recognised democratic values, and with that in mind, it adopted a Universal Declaration on Democracy in 1997 that sets out the fundamental principles of democracy and describes the components and exercise of democratic government.

Our daily work in the Inter-Parliamentary Union reflects this vision of democracy. We place particular emphasis on the need to strengthen democratic institutions and parliaments, to build partnerships between men and women in political affairs and to defend human rights. By the same token, we promote development, more specifically by accompanying and providing parliamentary input to the processes launched by the United Nations in Monterrey and Johannesburg.

I would like to suggest that we examine together those areas where parliamentary interaction with the United Nations is of particular importance and urgency at this stage. More specifically, I would like to invite you to a dialogue with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in which we determine together how best parliaments, through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, can assist in following up and implementing the Millennium Declaration and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is committed to a new stage of cooperation with the United Nations that will provide genuine mutual benefit to both organisations. You may rest assured that the resolution addressed to the IPU in the part of the Millennium Declaration that deals with the strengthening of the United Nations will not fall on barren ground. It will be taken up with the utmost seriousness by the parliaments of IPU, in close partnership with the members of the United Nations.