

**Draft speech of Mr. Daniel Florea, MP, Member of the IPU  
Romanian Group, Chamber of Deputies**

**General Debate on „Contemporary challenges to democracy:  
Overcoming division and building community”**

*Dear Mrs. President,  
Dear Mr. President,  
Dear Secretary General,  
Distinguished colleagues,*

First of all I would like to thank the IPU and the Spanish hosts for giving us the opportunity to meet in person in these difficult times and I also congratulate you for the best conditions provided for our work.

The theme of the debate is extremely important as our democracies today face numerous challenges which require both solidarity and urgent political parliamentary attention.

We can say, with the disclaimer of a figure of speech, that pandemic brought out the best and worst in our Parliaments, societies, civil society and the democracy was affected at the same time.

If the civic space was impacted even before the current pandemic by the national security laws, by the reaction to terrorist threats, the pandemic intensified the impacts.

The voice of people shrank in its physical manifestations, but gained impressive online extension; civil society was maybe forced to abandon some of the topics put forward and some debate formats, but was instrumental in promoting and monitoring the respect for human rights during the pandemic, in organizing and reorganizing its participation in public consultations and decision-making.

The internet, widely available information and communication technologies and social networks, provided an unprecedented space for all kind of public initiatives to develop and thrive.

At the same time, xenophobia, racism, and hatred are still widespread in the whole world. The rise of political polarization is being observed in many countries and hate speech is present on the Internet and the media, and too often it finds its way into the political discourse.

Our Romanian parliamentarians have already committed to taking open, firm and pro-active stands against racism, xenophobia and hatred on whatever grounds and however they manifest themselves by joining No Hate Parliamentary Alliance. This Alliance aims to co-operate with national parliaments, public authorities and civil society organizations, in order to combat hate speech and xenophobia.

Dear colleagues,

We need to join our forces in this fight: the opposite of hate is solidarity. At the same time, as democratic parliaments we must prove firstly that we are transparent, open to public and accessible.

I believe all Parliaments are well-equipped to train individuals into democracy and to promote the action for democracy. It is our duty to create effective ways for the public to be consulted before laws are passed and to ask for action on particular subjects.

Thank you very much for your attention!