



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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139th IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 14-18.10.2018

Special session

70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Time to recommit to its vision and ideals

*Tuesday 16 October, 3 - 3.45 p.m.
CICG Plenary Hall*

Concept note

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted at a time when the world had only shortly before witnessed, yet again, the horrors of war. The UDHR served therefore as a beacon of hope, an inspiration to make the world a better place for everyone, as well as a stark reminder that there is nothing inevitable about peace.

The special session aims to look at how far we have travelled since the UDHR was adopted and how we can best address old and new challenges to have a world free from fear and want. At a time of heightened polarisation, conflict and global retreat on human rights, the session should also lead to the adoption of a declaration in which parliamentarians will recommit to the values and principles enshrined in the UDHR.

The inter-active session will look at questions such as: How can we bridge the implementation gap and ensure that international human rights standards lead to concrete and tangible change on the ground? How can the international human rights framework help us to prevent or resolve violent conflict? How can we give new life to the underlying notions of the universality and indivisibility of human rights? What is the importance of free speech in the face of shrinking space for civil society and political opposition, and of increased polarisation and distrust? What is our responsibility in raising human rights issues with specific states when states increasingly retreat behind their borders and question the values of equality and respect for human dignity?

The panel discussion will start with a short video which features Ms. Baleka Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa, and presents the life and legacy of the late South African President Nelson Mandela.

Mr. Marc Limon, Director of the Universal Rights Group, a human rights think tank based in Geneva, will moderate a discussion with:

- Ms. Gabriela Cuevas, IPU President
- Ms. Fawzia Koofi, MP (Afghanistan), member of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians
- Ms. Peggy Hicks, Director, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Mr. Toby Mendel, Executive Director of the Centre for Law and Democracy and author of the IPU Handbook on Freedom of Expression, which is being launched at the 139th IPU Assembly

At the end of the special session, the IPU Member Parliaments will be invited to adopt the aforesaid Declaration.



#IPU139