**Media Advisory**

**Parliaments of the world set out to strengthen international law at #IPU141 Assembly in Belgrade**

*Tuesday, 8 October 2019. For immediate release.*

Over 1700 parliamentarians and UN and civil society partners from around the world will meet in Belgrade, Serbia, from 13 to 17 October for the 141st IPU Assembly. Under the overarching theme of *Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and mechanisms, and the contribution of regional cooperation,* MPs will also discuss the latest developments to improve gender equality, empower young people, defend MPs’ human rights, and achieve universal health coverage.

The Serbian National Assembly will host delegates from some 140 countries, with over 70 Speakers of Parliament attending – one of the IPU’s records – as well as 40 Deputy Speakers and over 700 MPs, of whom 30 per cent are women and 17 per cent are young MPs under 45.

Serbia was one of the first members of the IPU, joining in 1891, shortly after the organization was founded in 1889. This is the second time that Belgrade has hosted an IPU Assembly; the 52nd Assembly was held in Belgrade in 1963.

**International law**

Since the IPU’s creation 130 years ago, political dialogue, the rule of law and the peaceful resolution of conflict through parliamentary diplomacy have remained its guiding principles. As at all IPU Assemblies, the IPU will facilitate dozens of parliamentary bilateral meetings in Belgrade to encourage greater regional cooperation and understanding between its Member Parliaments.

As well as celebrating the [IPU’s 130th anniversary](https://www.ipu.org/about-ipu/130th-anniversary), Members will mark the 70th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. Since their adoption in 1949, the Geneva Conventions have been the bedrock of international humanitarian law, which protects people in armed conflict.

The five-day Assembly has an ambitious and wide-ranging agenda, encompassing:

**Gender equality**

The IPU remains at the forefront of efforts to boost women’s representation in politics. The IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians will look at ways to ensure universal health coverage addresses the needs of women and girls and how to remove the legal, social, economic and financial barriers that prevent them from accessing health-care services.

The Forum will also hold a panel discussion to mark the 40th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, focusing on the role of parliaments in legislating for gender equality.

Following on from the IPU’s groundbreaking work on [violence against women in politics](https://www.ipu.org/our-impact/gender-equality/womens-rights/combatting-violence-against-women), a parity debate on the theme *#Not in My Parliament* will examine strategies to end sexist harassment and gender-based violence in parliament.

A workshop on quotas will look at the latest developments in the design and implementation of gender electoral quotas and draw lessons from the 62 countries that have gender electoral quotas or reserved seats for women in parliament.

**Young people and children**

Youth quotas to increase the number of young MPs will also be a topic, drawing on IPU research which has found correlations between women and youth representation in parliament.

Empowering youth is the theme of this year’s [Future Policy Award](https://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/future-policy-award-2019-empower-young-people-2/), which recognizes laws and policies that encourage young people to become more politically involved or help them access greener jobs. This year’s award is organized jointly by the IPU, the World Future Council and the United Nations Development Programme. The winners of the award will be celebrated during a special segment.

A workshop marking the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will zoom in on noteworthy initiatives that have been developed, including with the help of parliaments, to give children a voice and to take their interests into account.

**Human rights**

The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians will meet to consider what action to take to defend close to 300 persecuted MPs from Turkey, Uganda and Venezuela, as well as new cases from Brazil, Libya, Sierra Leone and Yemen.

**Sustainable development**

Giving a parliamentary dimension to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development remains a core subject at IPU Assemblies. A workshop will put the spotlight on decent work and economic growth (Sustainable Development Goal 8) – examining policies that create green jobs in the context of rapid climate change and the technological revolution of the twenty-first century.

The IPU will also launch, in partnership with the International Labour Organization, *Eliminating Forced Labour*, a new handbook for parliamentarians to address the issue of the 25 million people globally who are still subject to forced labour.

The Assembly’s Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights will submit a resolution on achieving universal health coverage by 2030 which is expected to be adopted by all Members.

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade will discuss digitalization at the service of responsible consumption and production, as well as preparing for the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Chile in December.

Meanwhile, the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security will be working towards a resolution on strengthening peace and security against threats and conflict resulting from climate-related disasters, to be presented at the next IPU Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 2020.

The Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs will examine the observance of international law today through the lens of the United Nations Charter and resolutions. It will also take stock of the results of a recent survey on the relationship between parliaments and the United Nations, and seek to further strengthen parliamentary engagement in global governance.

The full programme of the 141st IPU Assembly is available [here](https://www.ipu.org/event/141st-assembly-and-related-meetings).

Background

*The IPU is the global organization of parliaments. It was founded 130 years ago as the first multilateral political organization in the world, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between all nations. Today, the IPU comprises 179 national Member Parliaments and 12 regional parliamentary bodies. It promotes democracy and helps parliaments become stronger, younger, gender-balanced and more diverse. It also defends the human rights of parliamentarians through a dedicated committee made up of MPs from around the world. Twice a year, the IPU convenes over 1,500 parliamentary delegates and partners in a world assembly, bringing a parliamentary dimension to global governance, including the work of the United Nations and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*

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Opening press conference on Sunday, 13 October 2019 at 1 p.m. / Press Centre / 2nd floor, Sava Centre. Media entrance: 9 Milentija Popovića St.

Closing press conference on Thursday, 17 October 2019 at 1 p.m. / Press Centre / 2nd floor, Sava Centre. Media entrance: 9 Milentija Popovića St.

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