

MR. MADAM CHAIR

MR. PRESIDENT, PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

ON BEHALF OF THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT, OUR DELEGATION IS HONOURED TO BE HERE TODAY IN ST. PETERSBURG TO TAKE PART IN THE 137TH ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION.

I WANT TO TAKE A MOMENT TO THANK THE ORGANIZERS AND I WANT TO PARTICULARLY SINGLE OUT THE TERRIFIC YOUNG RUSSIAN STUDENTS WHO ARE VOLUNTEERING TO HELP MAKE OF THIS MEETING SUCH AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS.

IN 2017, THE INTERMINGLING OF CULTURES IS THE
NORM RATHER THAN THE EXCEPTION. OUR
SOCIETIES ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY
DIVERSE – ETHNICALLY, LINGUISTICALLY AND
RELIGIOUSLY.

IT IS OUR NEW REALITY.

A REALITY WHICH WE AS PARLIAMENTARIANS
MUST EMBRACE.

(POPULATION MIGRATION, URBANIZATION, LOWER
TRANSPORTATION COSTS AND TECHNOLOGICAL
CONNECTIVITY ARE AMPLIFYING THIS
PHENOMENON.)

WHILE CANADA HAS THREE CULTURAL FOUNDING
PILLARS, FRENCH, ENGLISH AND INDIGENOUS,
HUNDREDS OF OTHER NATIONALITIES AND

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO
OUR TAPESTRY.

THIS DIVERSITY IS REFLECTED IN OUR LAWS AND
POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

CANADA'S CONSTITUTION EXPLICITLY CONFERS
EQUALITY ON FRENCH CANADIANS,
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND ALL MEMBERS OF
CANADA'S ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES.

APPROXIMATELY 12% OF MY PARLIAMENTARY
COLLEAGUES WERE BORN OUTSIDE CANADA.

LET ME ILLUSTRATE PRACTICALLY. FULLY
ONE THIRD OF THE 125,000 PEOPLE I REPRESENT
ARE FOREIGN-BORN. MOREOVER, MY
CONSTITUENTS COME FROM OVER 200 ETHNIC
ORIGINS. THEY SPEAK MORE THAN

100 LANGUAGES. THEY REPRESENT OVER
FIFTEEN DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS.
SYNAGOGUES, CHURCHES, TEMPLES, MOSQUES,
GURDWARAS, CIRCLES OF WORSHIP – SIDE BY SIDE,
IN MUTUAL RESPECT – WITH HUNDREDS OF
INTERFAITH COUNCILS WORKING TO FOSTER
UNDERSTANDING, BREAK DOWN BARRIERS,
ENGAGE WITH YOUTH, IN SHORT, WORKING TO
OVERCOME FEAR AND BIGOTRY PREDICATED ON
IGNORANCE AND MISUNDERSTANDING.

IT'S A SIMPLE CHOICE : THE POLITICS OF FEAR AND
DIVISION, OR THE DIFFICULT, LABORIOUS YET
INDISPENSABLE EFFORTS REQUIRED TO PULL A
SOCIETY TOGETHER, WHERE DIVERSITY IS FINALLY
RECOGNIZED FOR WHAT IT IS : A SOCIETY'S
GREATEST STRENGTH.

PLURALISM IS CANADA’S NEW NORMAL. OUR CONSTITUTION STIPULATES THAT OUR RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS MUST BE INTERPRETED “IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE PRESERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE MULTICULTURAL HERITAGE OF CANADIANS.”

CANADA CONTINUES TO WELCOME DISPLACED AND PERSECUTED PEOPLE IN NEED OF PROTECTION AND SECURITY. OUR GOVERNMENT HAS RECENTLY RESETTLED MORE THAN 40,000 SYRIAN REFUGEES, AND ACCEPTS ALMOST 300,000 IMMIGRANTS A YEAR.

WHY?

BECAUSE CANADIANS UNDERSTAND THAT IMMIGRATION IS THE LIFE BLOOD OF OUR

COUNTRY – AND OUR ECONOMY. COLLEAGUES, WE WELCOME AND WE SUPPORT IMMIGRANTS.

THAT DOES NOT MEAN THAT CANADA IS IMMUNE TO RACISM, DISCRIMINATION AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE.

OUR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES HAVE FACED SEVERAL CENTURIES OF ABUSE, EXCLUSION AND SEGREGATION. AS CANADIAN PARLIAMENTARIANS, WE RECOGNIZE THAT WE HAVE A PARTICULAR RESPONSIBILITY TO ACHIEVE TRUE RECONCILIATION WITH CANADA’S FIRST PEOPLES.

LET ME SPEAK PLAINLY ON ANOTHER FRONT: ACROSS THE GLOBE, DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY AND EXPRESSION REMAINS A CONTINUING SCOURGE. THOSE AMONG US, INCLUDING IN THIS VENUE,

WHO IDENTIFY AS LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX, REQUIRE OUR FULL ATTENTION AND OUR PROTECTION. CANADA IS A STAUNCH SUPPORTER OF LGBTI RIGHTS – AT HOME AND ABROAD – AND WE MAKE NO APOLOGY FOR IT.

AS PARLIAMENTARIANS, WE ARE THE VOICE FOR THOSE WHO ARE NOT HEARD. WE HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DENOUNCE INJUSTICE AND DISCRIMINATION.

AND WE ARE NOT POWERLESS NOR WITHOUT ACCOUNTABILITY. TOGETHER, WE REPRESENT BILLIONS OF PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET. BY ELECTING US, THEY HAVE ENTRUSTED US TO PROTECT THEIR INVIOLOATE HUMAN RIGHTS. AND IN THIS, WE CANNOT PICK AND CHOOSE.

RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC MINORITIES, IMMIGRANTS,
WOMEN, THE HOMELESS, PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES, SENIORS, CHILDREN AND YOUTH,
THOSE SUFFERING FROM MENTAL ILLNESS – TO
NAME BUT A FEW. THEY ALL DEPEND ON US.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED IN CANADA IS THAT WE
ARE IN THIS TOGETHER. THAT NO ONE CAN BE LEFT
BEHIND. THAT WE MUST FIGHT RELENTLESSLY FOR
EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL OF OUR
CITIZENS.

AND IN SO DOING, CONTINUE TO BUILD A CANADA
WHERE DIVERSITY IS OUR GREATEST SINGLE
SOURCE OF STRENGTH.

THERE ARE NO SIMPLE, UNIVERSAL OR DEFINITIVE
ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS. BUT ONE THING IS
FOR CERTAIN: CANADA CONGRATULATES THE

IPU'S EFFORTS TO PROVIDE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS OUR RESPECTIVE EXPERIENCES IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF RESPECT, OPEN-MINDEDNESS AND CIVILITY.

IN CLOSING, I WOULD LIKE TO REMIND ALL DELEGATES THAT CANADA HAS THE HONOUR OF HOSTING THE FOURTH GLOBAL CONFERENCE OF YOUNG PARLIAMENTARIANS, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN A MONTH FROM NOW ON NOVEMBER 17TH AND 18TH IN OTTAWA, IN THE HEART OF OUR BEAUTIFUL NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS FROM EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOUR COUNTRIES.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ATTENTION.