



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

**Statement by Mr. Alonso Diaz-Caneja,
Vice-President of the IPU Executive Committee**

**Opening of the Annual Parliamentary Hearing
at the United Nations**

New York, 28 November 2011

Mr. President of the General Assembly,
Madam Under-Secretary-General,
Fellow Parliamentarians,

I am honored to be here today in such distinguished company, to help open the proceedings of the 2011 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations. I bring you the greetings of Speaker Abdelwahad Radi, the recently-elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Morocco held parliamentary elections just three days ago, and Mr. Radi was comfortably re-elected. I take this opportunity to warmly congratulate him. Urgent tasks in the aftermath of the elections have prevented President Radi from travelling to New York, and he has asked me to address opening remarks on his behalf.

We are privileged to have with us today the President of the UN General Assembly, His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro. I would like to thank them both for their engagement and strong support. We are particularly grateful to President Al-Nasser and his office for their close cooperation in the preparations of this joint event.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Year after year, we have been meeting here in New York for an exchange of views with United Nations officials, ambassadors and leading academics, and to learn from each others' experiences. The annual Hearing is a cornerstone of our evolving partnership with the United Nations. The United Nations' mission to make the world more stable, free of war and poverty, cannot be achieved without the active input of parliaments and parliamentarians

For many years now, we have been working together to develop and strengthen the relationship between the United Nations and the world of parliaments. You may recall

that one year ago, in December 2010, the General Assembly formally decided to engage more systematically with the IPU to ensure a more effective parliamentary contribution to major United Nations processes and in the review of international commitments. Consultations with Member States will soon begin to pave the way for a forthcoming debate of the General Assembly on “*interaction between the UN, national parliaments and the IPU*”. We trust that this process will help to define further the concrete ways in which we can support each other in our common objectives of peace, democracy and development.

I am also confident that the Parliamentary Hearing this week will show once again the benefit of this interaction. The summary of our discussion will become available next January and will be circulated in the General Assembly. I would like to encourage you to see to it that the report is widely circulated and discussed in your parliaments as well.

Colleagues and Friends,

Whether it's in Tahrir Square and the broader Arab region, or just a few blocks away on Wall Street, people around the world are telling us, loud and clear, that they are not satisfied. People want social justice and economic opportunity. They want governments and institutions that are transparent and accountable for their decisions.

The task of reconciling the different and often contradictory perspectives of our constituents through effective public policies represents an enormous challenge. Doing so at a time of profound changes in society, in the political landscape and in the institutions of governance, is even harder. Yet, that is the obligation that is placed upon every one of us by virtue of our parliamentary mandate.

The discussion today and tomorrow on engaging youth and civil society in the democratic process, and on making the management of public funds more transparent and fair, will illustrate the challenges that virtually every politician in the world is facing at the moment.

It will also illustrate some of the solutions and opportunities available to us to bring about change. Are we doing all we can to meet the aspirations of our youths? How do we improve on our interaction with civil society organizations? Can we not do better at fighting corruption, tax evasion, and other misuses of public funds which are undermining the trust in government almost everywhere? There is no escaping the urgency of these questions.

On the global level, the General Assembly offers a unique platform for all Member States to address issues of concern. However, many of the decisions of the General Assembly and indeed of many other international bodies are never implemented. Very few of these decisions are shared with national parliaments, and there is hardly any prior consultation in parliaments on issues and positions that governments intend to promote at the United Nations. One might ask therefore: who is accountable for the decisions of the General Assembly?

As we discussed last year, there can be no substitute for the General Assembly. Less representative bodies, such as the G20, must respect that fact. However, if the General Assembly is to maintain its leadership role, it must become more transparent, more effective and more accountable. We believe that the IPU and our member parliaments, though our growing cooperation with the United Nations, can be part of the solution.

Demand for greater political accountability does not come a minute too soon. With the gap between the rich and poor widening every day, and with so many people feeling disenfranchised in every corner of the world, the whole global community is at serious risk of further instability and unrest. As a recent slogan put it, “only democracy is too big to fail.” Let this Hearing and its follow up be an opportunity for us to come together and move in the right direction.

Thank you.