

**Speech by Ambassador Dr. Deo Mwapinga Secretary-
General, Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference
on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR) during the 151st IPU
General Debate**

Hon. President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Dr Tulia Ackson

**Honourable Speakers, Leader of delegations, and Members of
Parliaments,**

Hon. Secretary General, Martin Chungong

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply honoured to address this October Assembly on behalf of the Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR), a regional parliamentary mechanism committed to advancing peace, democracy, and human rights across one of Africa's most complex yet resilient regions.

Today's theme "**Upholding humanitarian norms and supporting humanitarian action in times of crisis**" could not be more timely.

Across our region and the world, we are witnessing unprecedented humanitarian emergencies: armed conflicts displacing millions, climate crisis, deepening food insecurity, and political instability eroding the social fabric of our communities.

These crises test not only our institutions but also our shared humanity. They compel us as parliamentarians to reaffirm that humanitarian norms are not optional ideals but binding moral

and legal obligations rooted in international law and African solidarity

Excellencies,

When disaster strikes, the first response often comes not from international agencies, but from national institutions in which parliaments are central among them.

We legislate to protect; we allocate budgets to sustain life-saving interventions; and we hold governments accountable to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality, and independence.

At FP-ICGLR we believe that humanitarian leadership must be home-grown and people-centered but globally supported.

That is why we are working with partners such as the IPU, the AU, and UN to strengthen humanitarian governance ensuring that international aid aligns with national priorities and reaches those most in-need.

Excellencies,

The African experience offers valuable lessons to the world:
that humanitarian crises are rarely confined by borders, and that solidarity is a source of strength.

The Great Lakes Region alone stretching from Angola to Kenya, from Tanzania to Zambia- **has lived through cycles of conflict, displacement, and recovery.**

Yet it is also a region of resilience, where parliaments and governments have demonstrated courage to confront the root causes of instability from illicit exploitation of natural resources to weak governance and social exclusion.

Excellencies,

Let also be aware that **we are living in a time when conflicts are politicized, and compassion is sometimes weaponized.** We cannot allow humanitarianism to be selective.

We must insist that every life whether in **Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine, or Eastern DRC carries equal worth and equal right to protection.**

When we, as parliamentarians, choose compassion over indifference, justice over impunity and cooperation over isolation, we can restore hope to millions who look to this Assembly for leadership. Let this Assembly send a clear message: **that the world still has a conscience.**

Excellencies,

At this defining moment in history, let us remember that the strength of humanitarian norms lies not in the words of treaties but in the courage of our actions.

We urge **the international community** to match compassion with commitment to finance humanitarian action sustainably, **to respect the neutrality of humanitarian workers,** and to protect civilians and infrastructure from the violence of war.

From the Great Lakes Region of Africa to every corner of the globe, let us reaffirm that solidarity is stronger than conflict, and that parliamentary Diplomacy can turn compassion into concrete action.

On behalf of the Forum of Parliaments of the ICGLR, I thank the Inter-Parliamentary Union for providing this global platform for dialogue, and I reaffirm our unwavering partnership in promoting peace, stability, and humanitarian leadership across Africa and beyond.

Thank you!