

**SPEAKING NOTES
THE HONOURABLE NOËL A. KINSELLA
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE**

**WELCOMING REMARKS AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY OF
THE 127TH ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
(IPU)**

**QUÉBEC CITY, QUÉBEC
21 OCTOBER 2012**

Your Excellency (the Governor General),
President Radi,
Mr. Launsky-Tieffenthal,
Ms. Charlton (in lieu of Speaker Scheer),
Mayor Labeaume,
Chief Sioui,
Distinguished Parliamentarians,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the Parliament of Canada, it is a pleasure to welcome all of you to the 127th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

This is the fourth time that Canada has hosted this event, which is the largest international assembly of parliamentarians, with 2012 also marking the 100th anniversary of Canada's formal affiliation with the IPU.

Over the course of those years, the Parliament of Canada has repeatedly demonstrated its strong support of the IPU.

The IPU stands as a key organization in assisting parliaments and parliamentarians in responding effectively to the needs of people and their aspirations for peace, human rights, gender equality and development. These are all matters that are of great importance to Canadians and Canadian parliamentarians.

The theme of the 127th IPU Assembly, *Citizenship, identity and linguistic and cultural diversity*, provides an opportunity for the Parliament of Canada to raise awareness about a topic that is central to the Canadian experience.

Canadians are extremely proud of our ethnic diversity, linguistic duality and multiculturalism, representing communities from around the world; of the rich heritage and traditions of our Aboriginal peoples – the blessing which we just received being one element you have already experienced; and of our commitment to build a more tolerant and respectful society.

The Parliament of Canada championed the overall theme for this Assembly in view of its congruency with IPU values. These place an emphasis on the principles of respect for human rights. The IPU family, currently representing more than 160 parliaments, is strengthened by the promotion of these values, as is Canada.

Both the IPU and the Parliament of Canada also share the goal of promoting and advancing the core values of parliamentary diplomacy and democracy. Allow me to say a few words about parliamentary diplomacy and the value of the IPU in this context. The work of diplomacy, dialogue, and building relations is an important feature of the work of State representatives, one which is supplemented and assisted by parliamentary diplomacy.

As I have written and said elsewhere, in today's environment of increased interdependence, democratisation, global challenges and multiplication of communications, interparliamentary relations have heightened importance and profile.

By offering additional channels of communication, parliamentary diplomacy is a complementary tool to traditional diplomacy on sensitive issues. Our ability to speak freely on issues with our foreign counterparts helps to foster understanding, building networks and trusting relationships. In some cases, the interpersonal connections created through these interactions contribute to easing inter-state tensions.

The IPU has been vital to the exercise of parliamentary diplomacy. Our parliamentarians have come to greatly appreciate the IPU's value as a forum for dialogue among legislators from diverse parliaments and all geopolitical regions. Its members may represent very different political and economic regimes, but via

the Union's assemblies and meetings exchanges of views and networking occurs in an atmosphere of freedom and confidence. These exchanges help to cast new light on issues, enhancing understanding, better informing decisions at the national level, and moving discussions towards a solution.

I have no doubt that this 127th IPU Assembly will reinforce the value of parliamentary diplomacy and will continue to build our common knowledge and mutual understanding for the benefit of our countries and our people.

In closing, we welcome you to Canada and offer our best wishes for a successful Assembly.