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Statement by the Inter-Parliamentary Union
delivered by His Excellency Mr. Roch-Marc Christian Kaboré
President of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso

**HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
ON RESOURCES MOBILISATION AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR POVERTY
ERADICATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME
OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES
FOR THE DECADE 2001-2010**

New York, 29 June 2004

Madam President,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), it is a pleasure to take the floor in this high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council.

I would like on behalf of the President and Secretary General of the IPU to extend our warmest greetings to all participants, and to wish them every success in this session.

Since the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, despite an increase in real terms in official development assistance (ODA) and some positive developments in economic growth and productivity, there have still been strong disparities between countries.

Also, certain decisions made recently by the World Trade Organization demonstrate that the concerns of the least developed countries are beginning to be taken seriously in the world trade system.

Yet the overall picture is still mixed. There is still no real prospect of debt relief for many countries. The Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative is proving too complex and slow in implementation, while total debt is becoming unbearable for the least developed countries, so much so that some countries can no longer cover their long term debt.

While the objective of earmarking 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of the wealthy countries to ODA for poor countries has still not been met, access of the least developed countries to export markets, in particular for agricultural products and raw materials, is still severely restricted.

What is more, the predominance of the informal sector in these countries is a handicap to the effective mobilisation of income for the financing of their poverty reduction policies and programmes.

As a result, most of these countries will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and above all the reduction of poverty by half by 2015.

This is of concern to our Union, which for years has worked with national parliaments to improve their ability to help the executive branch meet development challenges.

Thus, while it works to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to carry out their constitutional functions, the IPU is also a vital force that allows the parliamentarians of the world to contribute to international dialogues on sustainable development, trade and the environment.

Madam President,

Today's discussion is centred on the mobilisation of resources, a subject that the IPU has addressed on numerous occasions. During a special session that its Executive Committee held in 2001, the Union invited donor countries to meet the objective of providing 0.7 per cent of their GDP in ODA, and to encourage private capital and investment flows to developing countries.

We are convinced that poverty cannot be combated effectively unless citizens are involved at all levels in the decision-making process and feel that they are masters of the development strategies, in a context of transparent and responsible governance.

This demands strong parliamentary institutions, armed with the necessary capacities to play their roles and fulfil their missions with the population, with those in government and with international institutions.

The IPU has taken action directly by mobilising and providing resources to help strengthen parliaments in general, and has provided technical assistance in support of the parliaments and the constitutional development of such countries as Cape Verde, Mozambique, Equatorial Guinea and Timor-Leste.

It is also now engaged in negotiations to assist Afghanistan in carrying out elections, with a view to establishing a new parliament.

Madam President,
Honourable delegates,
Distinguished participants,

Democracy is based on a genuine partnership between men and women and the elimination of inequality between the sexes. That is why our Union supports the participation of women in decision-making processes and in politics. It is particularly devoted to ensuring that women's concerns are taken into consideration in the parliamentary budget process, as the role of women as the mainstay of the family, as creators and educators is fundamental in so many countries.

Their social and economic role in development absolutely must be given its due in the political process and taken into consideration during the drafting of national poverty reduction strategies.

Documents setting out poverty reduction strategies must be submitted to parliament as part of an institutionalised consultation process on a more systematic basis.

We have seen some very encouraging signs. In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, the proportion of women elected to parliament has grown by 4 per cent since 2000. Rwanda is now the country with the highest proportion of women in parliament.

To encourage this trend, the IPU has provided technical assistance aimed at enhancing the role of women in politics or at bringing them to participate in the budget process in 14 of the least developed countries: Angola, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Chad, Djibouti, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Timor-Leste, and Togo.

The IPU is continuing to work to democratise international decision-making forums. It has called for a stronger involvement of parliaments in the oversight of multilateral organisations' decisions and activities.

Specifically, the Union has taken action to bring citizens closer to multilateral trade and financial institutions, and to make such bodies more democratic, transparent and equitable.

Because of the considerable importance of trade for the least developed countries in particular, and more generally all developing countries, the IPU has established a permanent parliamentary conference on the World Trade Organization (WTO), with the aim of increasing the transparency of that body's work and specifically ensuring that the poor countries are represented fairly at the negotiating table.

Because of the important role of agriculture in the economies of the least developed countries, the IPU works to eliminate price distortions on the world market for cotton and other commodities.

In trade in HIV/AIDS drugs, a sector of special importance to the economies of the least developed countries, the IPU firmly supports all measures aimed at making inexpensive generic drugs more widely accessible.

Madam President,

As the United Nations seeks to give a new impetus to its relations with national parliaments, I am sure that the IPU, the world organisation of parliaments, will be a driving force in making the voices of the most disinherited heard during our discussions here in New York.

But the main effort must be made by the national parliaments themselves, and by their own inter-parliamentary institution. For citizens to be heard, the parliamentary institutions must be more sovereign in each country. If that happens, then the first of the Millennium Development Goals - reducing poverty by half by 2015 - can be achieved.

Thank you.