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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Closing of the Parliamentary Meeting at COP28

Dubai, 6 December 2023

Honourable Speakers of Parliament,
Parliamentarians,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I have the privilege to deliver some closing remarks as we wrap up what has truly been a monumental day for parliamentary action on climate change.

Please let me start by thanking Speaker Ghobash and the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates for graciously co-organizing this Parliamentary Meeting with the IPU. The efforts of everyone involved in bringing this meeting to fruition are immensely appreciated. Our hosts here in the UAE have gone above and beyond, and for that we are grateful.

Please also allow me to thank Ms. Meera Al Suwaidi for her remarks and for presenting the Outcome Document for this Parliamentary Meeting. The rich debates that have taken place among IPU Members in order to bring this document to life have resulted in a tangible output that sets out a path for clear, ambitious, and targeted parliamentary action. It puts parliaments and parliamentarians at the heart of the climate movement.

I believe today will leave a lasting impression on us all. The IPU has been organizing parliamentary meetings at the COP since 2009. Never have we seen such a strong participation. Nearly 500 participants from over 60 countries have joined us here. This is a testament to the sheer responsibility that you all feel as parliamentarians to take action before it is too late.

As you know, 2023 is on track to be the hottest year on record. With each passing moment, the climate crisis is worsening and there is simply no time to waste. Glaciers are melting in the Arctic, island nations in the Pacific are at risk of disappearing, biodiversity is under threat in the Amazon, droughts in the Sahel are crippling lives and livelihoods. The impacts are limitless- on the environment but also on the social and economic fabrics of our societies. They are furthermore a source of potential instability and a threat to human security. Climate change is touching literally every corner of the globe.

For the first time this Parliamentary Meeting was organized within the Green Zone, amongst the negotiations happening at COP. This sends a strong signal on the importance of parliaments in shaping global collective action on climate change. Once and for all, parliaments and parliamentarians are no longer on the sidelines. Nevertheless, parliamentary involvement must become part and parcel of the formal process at COPs. As elected representatives of the people, parliamentarians are key to translating national climate issues to the global stage. Parliaments need to have a seat at the table at the COP from here on out.

Today parliamentarians from around the world have shared honest accounts of climate change impacts on the ground in their countries. Leading climate experts have shared with us the stark reality of what climate science is telling us. Implementation of the Paris Agreement is far from where it needs to be. We have heard that parliaments must be proactive in updating and enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions. Without this, the world's climate promises, which are only hanging on by a thread, will be in peril.

Today it has been made clear that those least responsible for climate change are sadly the ones on the frontlines. Vulnerable and marginalized populations are truly paying the price for others. Displacement, famine, loss of livelihoods are becoming all too common. We can no longer ignore this.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is time for climate justice. Equity and human rights must be put at the heart of climate decision-making from here on out. The Loss and Damage Fund which was adopted here is one option for making this happen. It is essential for ensuring those that bear the brunt of climate impacts get the resources they deserve. Developed and developing countries must join together and ensure funding is channelled to where it is most needed. An ambitious investment in this mechanism is essential as the impacts of climate change knows no boundaries.

As members of Parliament, I urge you to engage your constituents and civil society to understand how climate change is affecting them each and every day and ensure that these concerns are channelled into real action so that they can adapt and thrive. I encourage you to hold your governments to account to make sure their promises on climate action are upheld and translated into national legislation. After all, the lives and livelihoods of populations depend on these promises.

While we have had critical discussions on the challenges created by the climate crisis, we have also heard incredibly inspiring stories of how parliaments and parliamentarians are addressing climate change head on. From Tuvalu to Chad to Bangladesh, parliamentarians are stepping up and leading a transformation. For that, I applaud you.

The commitment that parliamentarians feel not only as political figures, but also as human beings, to ensure the world is liveable for future generations is clear. We are all in this struggle together as citizens of Planet Earth.

The IPU stands ready, more than ever, to ensure parliaments are fully equipped with the tools they need to address this emergency. The Parliaments for the Planet campaign has shown that the global parliamentary community is engaged and eager to advance climate action. The IPU, as the global organization of national parliaments, will continue to provide support to parliaments and provide a platform in the future to foster critical inter-parliamentary discussions like those that took place today. As climate change knows no borders, cooperation among parliaments is essential.

The IPU will continue to provide technical support and produce targeted guidance for parliaments on climate change in cooperation with key partners who are leading climate and environment experts. We will continue to organize inter-parliamentary dialogues, both in-person and virtually, to ensure parliaments have a platform to debate and learn from each other in the pursuit of joint climate solutions. I encourage you to take part in these activities, which are at the heart of the IPU.

I hope that the Outcome Document of this Meeting serves as the guiding light needed to push forward climate efforts, both individually and collectively, to bring about real change. I encourage you to share the document and the valuable insights you gained from this meeting in your respective countries. Let us make Dubai a turning point in our joint fight against climate change, and the stepping stone needed to bring the Paris Agreement goals to life.

With this, I would like to thank you for participating and for your invaluable contributions. I now officially close the Parliamentary Meeting at COP28.