



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Speech by IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong

Young Women's Political Participation and Leadership

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UNSG Youth Envoy, Jayathma Wickramanayake,
UN Women Namibia Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka,
Deputy Minister, Emma Theofelus,

I am very pleased to be with you. From the outset, I thank you for the flagship cooperation that we enjoy to join forces in the fight against all forms of intended and unintended marginalization.

Dear participants,

Welcome to you all and a special welcome to the young women who are with us today. Thank you all for joining. We are thrilled to host what I see as a unique forum of dialogue between young women and political decision-makers.

We are all here today because we share a common determination to support and enhance young women's access to political decision-making and their leadership in public affairs.

This is an ambition rooted in a growing sense of urgency to eliminate structural and institutional challenges, negative norms and stereotypes as well as sexism and gender-based harassment and violence that prevent young women from taking part in politics.

IPU research has revealed that only 2.2 per cent of the world's parliamentarians are under 30 and less than 1 per cent of them are young women parliamentarians. Our research has also showed a high prevalence of violence against women parliamentarians and an even greater prevalence of violence against the young women in parliament.

Redressing young women's under-representation calls for political will and commitment, strong policy measures and, multi-stakeholders support and partnerships.

As the IPU marks the 10th anniversary of its landmark resolution on Youth participation in the democratic process, this call is high on our organization's agenda and was reaffirmed again, most recently by the leaders of parliaments worldwide, who agreed that the leadership by young women and young men was key for democracy and development.

We should not let 2020 be the year of a global pandemic only. It should be the year where the world made the quantum leap towards full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with and for young women.

The inclusive, frank, action-oriented and forward-looking conversation that I hope will take place today is a crucial step in that direction.

Let's build on the good will expressed by so many political leaders, let's take the opportunity of this year's milestones for gender equality and youth participation and let's come up with concrete means to support gender-inclusive youth leadership at all levels and everywhere.

For me, a key entry point is the very institutions entrusted the noble responsibility to represent the people. Parliaments should be open to young women's participation and leadership, they should be gender-sensitive and transform their functioning and structures to facilitate work-life balance for people of all ages, promote legal change towards better inclusion of young women and be key actors in young women's political empowerment.

Opening up parliamentary processes to young women and girls in all their diversity is a priority to ensure they can contribute to parliamentary work throughout the policy and law-making cycles: from design to monitoring and evaluation.

Last but not least, removing legal barriers and introducing special measures such as to support the access of young women to elected office are also priority actions to be taken.

We stand ready to promote and support these endeavours and the others that you will bring up today.

I look forward to insightful, frank, vibrant and inclusive discussions.

Thank you for your attention.