



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong IPU Secretary General

INTER PARES Global Virtual Conference
'Catalysing Parliamentary Action to Fight Climate Change'

Virtual presentation, 11 May 2021

Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I am honoured to join this global virtual conference on 'Catalysing Parliamentary Action to Fight Climate Change'. INTER PARES is an important partner for the IPU in the area of parliamentary strengthening and I wish to thank them for the invitation to address this meeting.

As many of you may know, the keynote speaker for this conference was scheduled to be my very good friend Speaker Mohamed Nasheed of the People's Majlis of the Maldives who was unfortunately injured in an explosion in Malé last week. Mr. Nasheed is a prominent advocate for increased climate action and is committed to stronger parliamentary action on climate change. While Mr. Nasheed is not able to join us today, we will continue the dialogue on strengthening parliamentarians' role in addressing the climate crisis, and we sincerely wish him a full recovery.

Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time. Indeed, we are now talking about the climate emergency. The impacts of climate change are not only leading to environmental degradation but are also severely undermining development gains. The climate crisis is not only a critical concern of today, but also for the future. We must ensure that our children and youth, and all future generations, have the right to a healthy and sustainable planet.

This is a time for action. COVID-19 has shown how fragile society is and that our planet's resources are limited. Many of the people who have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic are also dealing with severe climate change impacts.

As countries reallocate resources to cope with the pandemic, there is an urgent need for recovery strategies that not only promote economic growth, but that are aligned with climate change and sustainable development objectives. Despite its challenges, the pandemic provides an opportunity for enhanced climate action. A green and inclusive recovery is necessary if we are to address the climate crisis.

Given the rapid pace of climate change, parliaments must rally around strong climate action now. Parliaments can prioritize clean and renewable energy initiatives, the creation of green jobs, biodiversity protection, and the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Parliaments are instrumental in making sure climate action happens at the national and local level.

Parliamentarians can ensure that legislation on climate change is both nationally appropriate and aligned with the Paris Agreement. They can and must allocate adequate funding to support climate action and develop mechanisms for oversight of the government. Parliamentarians can also ensure the needs of their constituents that

are most at-risk of climate change impacts are met through their representation function.

The IPU remains fully committed to supporting parliaments in addressing climate change. A resolution was adopted at the 141st IPU Assembly in 2019 urging all Parties to implement the Paris Agreement, and the Declaration of the 5th World Conference of Speakers in August 2020 reaffirms parliamentarians' commitment to Paris Agreement implementation. The Declaration states, I quote, "*the path towards carbon reduction must form an important part of our future strategy in order to build more resilient societies, by transitioning towards a climate-neutral economy...*" end of quote. As the IPU prepares its new strategy for 2022-2026, IPU Member Parliaments have said loud and clear that climate is a priority. This message is particularly clear among the IPU's Forum of young MPs who are making strong calls for enhanced action. We must capitalize on this energy and motivation.

The IPU focuses on global awareness raising, partnership-building, and fostering dialogue on climate change and its linkages with other cross-cutting issues including youth, gender and the SDGs.

We recently produced with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) a policy note for parliamentarians that outlines a 'green' recovery approach to the COVID-19 pandemic that also helps countries achieve their commitments under the Paris Agreement. The IPU and UNEP will also provide tailored national-level support to a selected number of countries on this topic. The IPU and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) will soon finalize a toolkit on strengthening parliamentarians' engagement in addressing disasters and climate-related risks. Furthermore, in partnership with the Italian and UK parliaments, the IPU is co-organizing parliamentary meetings around COP26 to be held in Rome and Glasgow later this year to further boost parliamentary action around the climate agenda.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the crucial role of parliaments in combatting climate change. The legislative, budgetary, oversight and representation actions of parliaments today will have a long-term effect on the planet's future. Parliaments are critical for driving transformational change for a healthier planet and society. I sincerely look forward to the rich and lively discussions that will take place during this event. The IPU will surely consider the outcomes of this conference in our work on climate change going forward. I hope this event will inspire more ambitious parliamentary action on climate change for a more sustainable future for all. Thank you.