



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Annual high-level panel discussion on human rights mainstreaming
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Excellency, Distinguished President of the General Assembly,
Excellency, President of the Human Rights Council,
Excellency, colleague Madame High Commissioner for Human Rights,

Dear Colleagues, Tedros and Louise,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First, let me thank the President of the Human Rights Council for inviting me to join this high-level panel.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, in terms of its nature, composition and main objectives, is the embodiment of the topic of this panel.

National parliaments which are the members of the Organization, are symbols of diversity, bringing together representatives of all components of society.

We are keen to promote universal participation of all parliaments in the work of the IPU. The IPU has grown exponentially over time. We started out in 1889 with a handful of parliamentarians. Today the IPU has 178 National Parliaments as members. We are currently making every effort to encourage other parliaments, especially those from the Caribbean and the Pacific, to join our organization.

Bearing in mind the challenges several of these parliaments are facing, we have created a solidarity fund to support those with limited means, for example to cover their participation in our statutory Assemblies. For us, the more remote these parliaments are, the more important it is for their voices to be heard. We are also creating space within our statutory bodies for the SIDS to forge common positions.

In recent years we have made a determined effort to expand services in Spanish in order to promote greater interaction with the parliaments in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The IPU aims, inter alia, to foster contact, co-ordination and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries; and to contribute to the defence and promotion of human rights, which is an essential factor in parliamentary democracy and development.

We truly believe in an inclusive and multilateral approach to addressing the common challenges we are facing, including those relating to human rights, climate change, insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic. I am aware that, in the modern world, nothing

can be done in a silo, and that solutions that result from collective reflection – from all components of society – often prove to have the most lasting impact.

We are deeply committed to the principle of men and women sharing responsibility and decision-making. We have put this into practice in our own organization, as well as driving change in parliaments and societies around the world. We don't just talk about gender equality - we are making it a reality. This principle applies both at the events we run and in our own structures and staff. We use a variety of mechanisms, including sanctions, to ensure gender equality. The results are clearly visible. In 1978, only 7.7 per cent of our Assembly delegates were women. Now, women MPs regularly account for about 30 per cent of participants and at times, more. The target is to achieve parity.

In a similar vein, the IPU has been actively promoting youth involvement in and beyond our Organisation. In 2010, IPU Member Parliaments adopted a landmark resolution on youth participation to encourage the rejuvenation of parliaments. More recently, in 2021, the IPU launched its campaign, *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament*, to promote stronger representation of our younger generations in parliaments.

As I have mentioned, human rights are part and parcel of the IPU's priorities, and are an integral part of our Strategy. We believe that strong democracy goes hand in hand with properly managed human rights.

To this end, our approach to the promotion of human rights is two pronged:

- First, integrating a human rights perspective across all IPU activities;
- Second, strengthening the contribution of parliaments – in accordance with their constitutional prerogatives – to the promotion and respect of human rights, especially through the work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review. In these endeavors, the IPU is also promoting and protecting the human rights of MPs.

The IPU has, from the outset, held that parliaments and the Human Rights Council are natural partners in a common pursuit to enhance respect for human rights at a national level. In recent years, the idea that the Human Rights Council stands to gain considerably from closer cooperation with parliaments has increasingly gained traction. Let me take this opportunity to thank the group of States which have supported the adoption in recent years by the Human Rights Council of the resolutions that advocate for stronger parliamentary involvement.

Further to these resolutions, the IPU, in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has as a matter of priority, organized activities to raise awareness among parliaments and provide capacity-building support on matters relating to the Human Rights Council and the contribution that parliaments can and must make.

(French language)

Dans le but de contribuer à la promotion du multilinguisme, l'UIP a organisé des activités à l'intention des Parlements membres du Commonwealth et de la Francophonie – en collaboration avec l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie – dont les plus récentes ont eu lieu aux mois de juillet et de novembre 2020, et d'octobre 2021.

Nos campagnes de sensibilisation ont porté leurs fruits puisque des parlements participent de plus en plus aux différentes étapes de l'Examen Périodique Universel, à savoir la contribution au rapport national, la présentation de ce rapport devant le Conseil des droits de l'homme, et la mise en œuvre des recommandations au terme de l'examen. Comme suite à cet intérêt manifeste, davantage de parlements sollicitent le soutien de l'UIP pour les aider à améliorer leur contribution à ce processus.

Eu égard au succès enregistré, nous envisageons d'organiser aussi des activités de sensibilisation similaires pour les parlements hispanophones, arabophones et russophones.

Je ne saurais conclure mes propos liminaires, sans vous renouveler l'assurance que l'UIP entend continuer de promouvoir cette approche indispensable de la participation universelle – à travers des perspectives parlementaires – au relèvement de nos défis communs, notamment ceux relatifs aux droits de l'homme.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.