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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Enhancing the role of parliaments in accelerating the achievement of the SDGs: Taking forward
the UNGA resolution

Geneva, 19 June 2023

Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UN
Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,
Ms. Olga Algayerova, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe,

Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to this webinar jointly organized with the UN Economic Commission for
Europe – the ECE, and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific – ESCAP.

This event follows up on the 2022 UN General Assembly resolution on *Enhancing the role of parliaments
in accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* which is the first ever
to focus solely on the role of parliaments in implementing the SDGs, a topic that represents one of the
key policy areas of the IPU.

We are very grateful to Uzbekistan, the initiator of the resolution, for its strong commitment and for
having mobilized some 80 UN Member States to sponsor the resolution.

The resolution recognizes the essential role parliaments play in bringing the SDGs to life through their
powers to legislate, budget and scrutinize government action, and it clearly demonstrates governments'
openness to enhance cooperation with parliaments to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development.

I am very proud that, through the IPU 2022-2026 Strategy, Member Parliaments have reiterated their
political commitment to sustainable development and have also collectively decided that action towards
the achievement of the SDGs should be prioritized over the five years covered by the strategy.

Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

We are at a critical juncture in human history. According to the latest report of the United Nations, the
SDGs are badly off track.

Under current trends, by 2030 only about one third of countries will meet the target to halve national
poverty levels, and shockingly, the number of people facing hunger and food insecurity could increase.

286 years would still be required to close the gender gap in legal protection and remove discriminatory
laws.

Concerning climate change, current actions to address the crisis are insufficient. In fact, carbon dioxide
levels continue to rise to a level not seen in two million years.

The overall picture is deeply concerning, and it is the developing countries and the world's poorest and most vulnerable people that are paying the highest price.

If we look at the Voluntary National Review (VNR), a process in which parliaments should definitely be involved considering their critical oversight role, we unfortunately observe that a lot more should be done. According to our analysis, in 2022, of the 42 countries that submitted their VNR report only 16 mentioned parliaments as active contributors.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I like to think that behind every problem lies an opportunity in disguise.

UNGA resolution 77/159, which is at the centre of our discussions today, explicitly encourages Member States to promote the engagement and support of parliaments in the follow-up and review processes on SDGs, particularly in the preparation of the VNRs. Parliaments should not miss this opportunity to use the resolution to enhance dialogue and cooperation with the executive branch.

Data does point to progress in some areas such as on SDG 7 – a Goal that will be reviewed in-depth at the High-level Political Forum this year – on affordable and clean energy and on access to electricity, the latter which had increased from 87% for the global population in 2015 to 91% in 2021.

Nevertheless, more access to affordable and clean energy remains critical for tackling the climate crisis and accelerating sustainable development.

Parliaments and parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to facilitate a clean energy transition and ensure that policies, plans and budgets are fully aligned with the SDGs. They must lead by example before preaching to the people.

The IPU's new campaign, *Parliaments for the Planet*, encourages them to take action to reduce the carbon footprint of their parliaments by changing day-to-day behaviour, improving the energy efficiency of their buildings, and reducing carbon emissions.

Action for climate and sustainable development begins at home and should not stop there. It should further develop also through this type of events that offer an important opportunity to enhance parliamentary dialogue, coordination and cooperation.

The IPU offers technical assistance on these issues. If this might be of interest, do not hesitate to contact our office to discuss how this support could be organized and tailored to your specific context.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my hope that you will use this privileged platform to benefit from the expertise of invited speakers, share your views with your peers and discuss how you can help implement the UN resolution so as to accelerate the achievement of all SDGs in a balanced, coherent and integrated manner.

I wish you a constructive discussion.