



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Reykjavik Global Forum 2023
'World in Focus' session

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Ms. Irene Fellin, NATO Special Representative for WPS,
Ms. Obiageli Ezekwesili, Chair of WPL,
Ms. Adela Raz, Director of Afghanistan Policy Lab, Co-Chair of the Reykjavik Global Forum
Madam Moderator,
Distinguished guests and participants,

It is my great pleasure to join you in this panel discussion. I would like to use the opportunity to thank the hosts for their invitation to co-chair the Global Forum on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The world which is our focus today is not a world on track! We are falling behind the timely realization of the SDGs, our main compass for a more sustainable and inclusive world. We have seen backsliding when it comes to peace, rule of law and human rights.

The world in focus remains unequal, presenting alarming trends on gender inequality. What we observe is a bittersweet combination of slow progress combined with considerable setbacks in women's rights.

We cannot afford to lose ground on gender equality. With today's multilayered and interlinked crises, the world needs to better harness the talents of women and create a level playing field for them to enter politics sooner rather than later and to take on leadership roles on equal terms with men.

According to IPU data, the global share of women in parliaments is at 26.7%, presenting a year-on-year increase of only 0.4 percentage points. At this rate, parity will not be achieved for nearly 60 years.

In the meantime, evidence is clear on what inclusive policy making can bring. Studies show that women's equal and meaningful participation in peace processes increases chances of lasting peace agreements, reinforces security and cements stability. The same holds true on the correlation between women's leadership and firm climate action.

Yet, until 2019 women made up only 13% of negotiators and 6% of signatories in all major peace processes around the world, a trend that extends until today.

This is a watershed moment. And parliaments are centrally placed to advance changes in this area.

Through their legislative, representative and scrutiny functions, parliaments have a central role in consolidating the rule of law, shaping social attitudes and reversing historical and structurally unequal power relations.

To do so, it is important that they invest in transforming themselves into gender-sensitive institutions, a concept developed by the IPU more than 10 years ago.

The concept regards a gender-sensitive parliament to be a place in which there are no barriers – substantive, structural or cultural – to women's full participation and to equality between its men and

women members and staff. It is not only a place where women can work, but also one where women want to work and contribute.

A gender-sensitive parliament sets a positive and global example by promoting gender equality and women's empowerment among society both nationally and internationally.

Moving ahead in 2024, we need determination to address the highly gendered challenges women continue to face across the board and in political life. We need clear commitments to advance women's representation in parliament, through ambitious gender quotas. We need the unconditional application of zero-tolerance policies in addressing sexism, harassment, and violence against women in politics in all corners of the world. Women must be able to count on genuine commitment by political leaders and institutions that deliver justice. Counting solely on their resilience and determination to pursue a career cannot be regarded a safeguard.

In a nutshell, we need to recalibrate the way to look into the future. Continuing to apply a business-as-usual mentality is no longer considered an option. The future of democracy lies within the capacity of our institutions to review their model of governance, their representativeness, their ability to bring everyone on board, to be accountable and think ahead.

Global fora such as this, and the International Gender Champions, which is leadership network I have the honour to chair, must be fully utilized to conceive ideas, exchange on good practices, and create new impetus for a gender-responsive, sustainable future.

In every crisis there is a silver lining. This is a time for bold leadership. Let's make 2024 one of those determining moments.