



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Speech by the IPU Secretary General, Mr. Martin Chungong

Conference on the Role of Parliaments in today's world:
25th anniversary of the Federal Council, Federal Assembly of the Russian
Federation

Moscow, 10 December 2018

Your Excellency, Valentina Matvienko, Speaker of Federal Council,
Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation,
Honourable Speakers of Parliament,
Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I bring you greetings and congratulations on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global organization of national parliaments, myself and President Cuevas. In the life of an institution, 25 years or a quarter of a century is a real milestone. I therefore commend Madam Speaker Matvienko and her colleagues of the Federal Council for convening this special conference on the occasion of your 25th anniversary.

The Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation (Duma – IPU member since 1993 with the Council of the Federation – upper House – created more recently) has been an active member of the IPU for many years and has brought an important contribution to the work of the IPU, more recently through the hosting in October 2017 of the highly successful St. Petersburg Assembly, - which among other things adopted the St Petersburg Declaration on Promoting cultural pluralism and peace through inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue.

Madam Speaker,

To Russia and the St Petersburg Assembly we also owe the initiative of establishing an International Day of Parliamentarism – which was formally consecrated this year in May through a UN General Assembly resolution. The International Day – 30 June – corresponds to the founding of the IPU almost 130 years ago, and together we will have an opportunity next year to give content and expression to this important initiative – in our respective national parliaments, but also at the regional and international levels.

All the themes selected for this special event today are most topical – indeed, the core mission of the IPU is dedicated to the promotion of political dialogue between parliaments to foster peace and understanding, and to the strengthening of the institution of parliament so that it may be representative, transparent, accountable, accessible and effective – and hence play its rightful role at the national and international levels.

History has shown the value of parliamentary diplomacy in building bridges and trust between nations and peoples – the role of parliamentarians at the end of the 19th century laying the foundations for the Permanent Court of Arbitration and the League of Nations, MPs from the East and the West in the 1960's at the height of the Cold War initiating a dialogue on security and cooperation in Europe, more recently MPs

from North and South Korea within the IPU, discreetly exploring avenues for dialogue and cooperation with a view to inter-Korean reconciliation, or Israeli and Palestinian MPs trying to identify specific areas of engagement (water management, women in politics, science for peace).

We see that there is an appetite - and a very real need – for greater inter-parliamentary cooperation, as evidenced by the growing number of regional, sub-regional and thematic parliamentary assemblies. Together, we are trying to build greater synergies and cooperation, so as to maximize the impact of our respective efforts. The IPU has already started preparations for the 5th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (to be held in 2020, in the context of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations), and we expect that it will represent a landmark in highlighting the value of parliamentary diplomacy.

In the meantime, the IPU is working hard with its Member Parliaments in the pursuit of some critical shared objectives:

1. ensuring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,
2. promoting and protecting the human rights of parliamentarians,
3. securing the political empowerment of women and encouraging greater access and a stronger voice for young parliamentarians,
4. helping to raise awareness in parliament around global agreements (climate change, migration, human rights) and equipping Member Parliaments with tools to help them translate these international commitments into national realities (through legislation, budgets and oversight) and
5. bridging the democracy gap in international relations (engaging parliaments and MPs and bringing their voice to global processes – the example just over the past two weeks of WTO and global trade, global compact on migration – Marrakesh, climate change – Krakow). From this perspective, we enjoy a strategic partnership with the United Nations, and strive to provide a parliamentary component to the work of the UN. We bring the voice of parliaments to the UN.

We live in difficult times and now, more than ever, the role of parliaments is critical in preserving our democratic gains and safeguarding multilateralism from attempts to revert to protectionism and isolationism (in this hugely interconnected world, we know that this is simply not tenable).

At the same time, we know that in many places around the world the parliaments still face formidable challenges, without the capacity or political influence to fully play their constitutional role. As we often say at the IPU, parliamentarians represent the people (especially the most vulnerable), and it is to them that their first loyalty lies – even if it means speaking out against abuse or injustice. It is through parliament that the adequate checks and balances can be exercised, and it is the place where – irrespective of differences of opinion or ideology – matters can be discussed and solutions can be peacefully found through dialogue, in the interest of the common good.

Thank you.