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Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland
www.ipu.org

IPU Statement

Mr. Martin Chungong
IPU Secretary General

National Workshop
“The National Assembly and the
United Nations 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development”

Da Nang, 17-18 December 2018

H.E. Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly,
Hon. Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly
Dep. Prime Minister and Ministers
Mr. Nguyen Van Giau, Vice-President of the IPU
Mr. Kamal Malhotra, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative to
the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very honoured to address you at the beginning of this important conference. Let me start by thanking the National Assembly of Viet Nam, in particular Madam President, Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, for receiving me with such warm hospitality and for the excellent arrangements that have been put in place to allow us to meet in the best conditions to discuss a crucial topic – the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I salute your commitment and leadership in the SDG agenda. Your speech is very illuminating. I also wish to acknowledge the support of the UN whose resident coordinator in UN is in Viet Nam with us today. It is such a pleasure to partner once again with you in delivering service to a member parliament of the IPU.

I now understand why I have a special attachment to Viet Nam. 1957 was when I was born. It is only natural therefore that, as Secretary General, I seek to strengthen ties with the National Assembly.

My participation in this event represents the continuation of a trustful and long partnership that started back in 1957 when the National Assembly of Viet Nam became a Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The National Assembly has always been an active Member of the IPU, keen to do its utmost to promote global peace, stability, cooperation and prosperity. The IPU applauds the commitment shown by the National Assembly in pursuing common purposes and in engaging with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I recall with great pleasure how this whole process started. It was in April 2015 when parliamentarians from over 130 countries gathered in Hanoi for the 132nd IPU Assembly and adopted the Hanoi Declaration “The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action”. That declaration underscored the global parliamentary community’s commitment to advancing the realization of the SDGs as a matter of priority.

Parliaments from across the world reaffirmed their vision of sustainable development based on human rights, poverty eradication, peace and security and highlighted the need for institutions such as parliaments, and decision-making processes, to be

strengthened so they are fit for purpose in realizing the new SDGs. “All aspirations will not become true if we do not act.” said Mr. Truong Tan Sang, then President of Viet Nam. Proactive engagement, an inclusive approach and political will are in fact crucial elements for the realization of the SDGs, as commitment alone cannot meet the challenges of the future.

I am very much heartened by the Viet Nam National Assembly's leading role in IPU events, not just by participating in SDGs regional and interregional seminars like the one held in Israel last November 2018 or the 2018 edition held in China of the interregional seminar on parliamentary capacity-building and the further implementation of the SDGs, but also by organizing the 1st regional seminar on achieving the SDGs for Parliaments in the Asia-Pacific region last 11-13 May 2017.

The seminar provided a platform for identifying which practical steps parliaments can take to support the implementation of the SDGs in their respective countries and in the region as a whole. Through the prism of the climate change challenges facing the region, it focused on the role of different stakeholders in the responses to climate change and on the requirement for national parliaments to take action in the form of legislation and to fulfil international commitments. Gender equality, as well as health and resource mobilization, was also at the core of the discussions.

I am very much confident that the partnership between the National Assembly and the IPU will continue to yield many good results in this challenging time as the world embarks on a journey to find effective and sustainable ways to eradicate poverty and realize the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are all aware of the importance and magnitude of the task of realizing the new development agenda. This is both a great opportunity and a huge responsibility for parliaments. As members of the parliamentary community engage on the SDGs, we need to continuously ask ourselves what difference our work and actions make for the people and the planet. Do they improve the economic well-being of the poorest and most marginalized? Do they respond to the specific needs of women and young people? Do they reflect human rights principles? Do they ensure that the legislative response to climate change is consistent with the aims of national climate legislation, the Paris Agreement and other societal goals like poverty reduction, gender equality, etc.? These are just some of the questions that we need to keep in mind as we promote democratic values and strengthen the capacity of our parliaments to effectively implement the SDGs. Indeed, democracy and strong parliaments must serve the people. They must deliver for the people. It is only then they can be considered relevant.

Madam Speaker, I share your perspective when it comes to the role of MPs in the SDGs. MPs and parliaments play a fundamental role in the realization of the SDGs through their ability to turn the voluntary commitment to the SDGs into enforceable laws, to hold their governments to account on development policy choices and strategies, and the adoption of national budgets. Parliaments have the obligation to oversee, identify problems and seek corrective measures that will ensure the attainment of the SDGs.

As representatives of the people, parliamentarians have an important advocacy mission in their communities. They are the bridge between the people and the government, and because of this they should do their utmost to ensure an inclusive process in which the voice and needs of marginalized groups are fully reflected in their

strategy. The SDGs are a unique opportunity for parliaments to demonstrate their commitment to improving people's lives and the health of the planet.

Allow me to use this opportunity to say a few words, as a member of the SUN Lead Group, a group of global leaders appointed by the UNSG to spur international efforts to improve nutritional standards worldwide. I know that Vietnam is an active member of the SUN Movement and that members of the National Assembly take a keen interest in all things nutrition. I would like to encourage you to further engage through tracking financial data for nutrition and parliamentary budget oversight and resource mobilization. I urge you to support an enabling environment for breastfeeding. Again, I am sure the National Assembly will be keen to see strengthened coordination between key ministries: Agriculture, Rural development, Education, Water and Sanitation; encouraging private sector involvement. I wrote last year to all SUN Movement Speakers of Parliament to convene multi-stakeholder consultations on nutrition to make it a priority. I reiterate that appeal. My colleague, Gerda Verburg, is ready to assist.

Today's workshop gives us a golden opportunity to further discuss the role of parliament in effectively implementing the SDGs at the national level. It will also allow us to listen to what other countries are doing to achieve the same goals, and most of all, to identify which steps should immediately follow this workshop. Today, we launch the Vietnamese version of the IPU/UNDP Toolkit. Thank you, UNDP, for working on this. I trust it will help the National Assembly and its partners in identifying opportunities for the way forward. I look forward to open and constructive debates and wish you a very successful meeting.

Thank you