



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

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

## **Statement by Mr Martin Chungong, Chairperson of the second session of the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law**

***40<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council - Agenda items 3 and 5, 13 March 2019***

Mr. President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Human Rights Council Resolution 28/14 of 2015 established the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, a biennial meeting “to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to the relationship between these areas” and to “identify and analyse best practices, challenges and opportunities for States in their efforts to secure respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. In its resolution 34/41, the Council decided that the theme of the second session of the Forum would be “Parliaments as promoters of human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. The second session of the Forum was held on 22 and 23 November 2018 in Geneva.

Participation at the Forum included representatives of States, national and regional parliaments, parliamentary associations, United Nations specialized agencies, regional and intergovernmental bodies, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations. Over 60 Members of Parliament, from all regions, attended the Forum.

As Chairperson of the Forum, I was tasked by resolution 28/14 with the preparation of the summary of the discussions which are contained in document A/HRC/40/65 and which I am honoured to present to you today.

Discussions at the Forum were organized around four thematic areas related to parliaments as promoters of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The first theme referred to:

### **1. Parliaments as key actors for the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law**

Under this agenda item, the participants discussed the numerous challenges parliaments face in fulfilling their functions and in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Participants explored the discrimination and structural inequalities affecting the capacity of women and groups that are marginalized or discriminated against to participate in parliamentary work and stand for parliamentary office. Discussions reflected on the need for members of parliament to enjoy their human rights as a prerequisite for promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law and heard about the important work of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. Recommendations laid particular emphasis on the need for all parliaments to promote such practices as providing human rights capacity-building for parliamentarians; having committees focusing on human rights; and building a culture of human rights across parliament, with human rights being part of the mainstream political discourse.

**The second theme of the forum discussions was:**

**2. Parliaments facing current global challenges to human rights, democracy and the rule of law**

The discussions focused on the actions available to parliaments in the light of current global challenges to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, including those affecting democratic institutions and principles, such as undue restrictions on public freedoms, the use of hate speech, attacks against journalists and the rise of populism. Participants also examined the challenges and opportunities posed by migration, and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To address these challenges, the forum participants recommended that parliamentarians and the press must push back against populists, try to reconcile divisions within society, and ensure that States abide by international human rights norms and standards. They also pointed out that legislators should abstain from using hate and divisive rhetoric, lead by example and build inclusive, respectful and responsible societies. In relation to migration, they should view this as a positive force and make it clear that States could not send migrants back to places where they knew that they would be persecuted.

**The third theme discussed was:**

**3. Parliaments working with others: is there room for more engagement?**

The discussions considered existing practices to make parliaments more transparent, open and accountable, and looked at how parliaments could better interact with other State institutions. The discussions then turned to the relationship between parliaments and the judiciary, and how those two institutions could complement each other to ensure better protection of human rights and the rule of law, while respecting their respective roles and independence. The discussions examined cooperation between parliaments and national human rights institutions, specifically how national human rights institutions could help ensure that parliaments factored human rights considerations into the law-making process. The discussions also considered cooperation between civil society organizations, the media and parliaments.

**Finally, the fourth theme of the forum referred to:**

**4. Enhancing the involvement of parliaments in international human rights mechanisms**

Discussions focused on measures to ensure structured and regular participation by national and regional parliaments in the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, including the universal periodic review. Participants called for the implementation of the recommendations included in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review (A/HRC/38/25) and further exploration of the Draft Principles on Parliaments and Human Rights, contained in its annex. Implementation of the recommendations of this OHCHR report should also be reflected in the national reports that go to the Human Rights Council in the framework of the UPR.

During the discussions, participants identified measures to increase collaboration between parliaments and the human rights treaty bodies, including in relation to the implementation of recommendations made by the treaty bodies. In this regard, it was pointed out that the way in which the CEDAW Committee is systematically calling for a strong parliamentary contribution to its work could serve as an example to other treaty bodies. Participants also examined the human rights work of international and regional

parliamentary organizations, including successful initiatives taken to strengthen the attention paid to human rights issues.

Mr. President, let me highlight in closing, that the recommendations of the Forum are thorough, wide-ranging, actionable and concrete. They are directed at Member States, but also at other actors, including international and regional organizations, civil society, and parliaments themselves. I encourage all stakeholders to make every effort to implement these recommendations. As the Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, you can count on my full support to put into practice these recommendations, which we will share with our Member Parliaments and request them to help implement and report on.

Needless to say, I was satisfied I by the unanimous agreement at the Forum on the importance of parliament in promoting and defending human rights, and the value of parliamentary committees, subcommittees and caucuses on human rights. I was heartened by the holistic and comprehensive approach to human rights displayed during the Forum. I am confident that the Forum met its objective to be a platform to promote dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to the relationship between human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and I look forward to its future sessions.

Thank you for your attention.