



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

CIS convention on standards for democratic elections: open space for
international cooperation

Saint Petersburg, 7 October 2022

Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the invitation to address the opening of this important conference. Elections are key moments in the political life of any country. They are the time at which the people choose whom to place their trust in to govern on their behalf. The moment at which the people choose their leaders and the political parties whose platform they feel best represents their aspirations for the future.

Precisely because the stakes are so high, it is incredibly important to have a common set of rules and principles for how an election is to be conducted. The IPU took a lead in this area in 1993 when its Governing Council adopted a set of “Criteria for free and fair elections” that are grounded in international law. Since then, many others have followed in this path and have developed electoral standards for use in a particular region or part of the world.

I congratulate the Commonwealth of Independent States for reaching a significant milestone, the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of its “Convention on the Standards of Democratic Elections, Electoral Rights and Freedoms”.

I particularly appreciate the words “democratic elections” in the title of this Convention. Democracy is a subject that is close to the heart of the IPU. Indeed, it is at the very core of our organization. We understand democracy to be both an ideal and a set of institutions that put the ideal into practice. As such, democracy can always be perfected. It is not a linear path, and democracy can advance just as it can regress. It is the responsibility of all of us to continue to push for the ever deeper practice of democracy, at every level.

You are gathered in St. Petersburg, and it is with satisfaction that I recall the 137th IPU Assembly that was hosted by the Russian Federation in St. Petersburg in 2017. One of the items on the agenda at that time was the twentieth anniversary of the IPU’s Universal Declaration on Democracy. Rapporteurs from India, the Netherlands and the Russian Federation worked together to prepare a resolution in which the Member parliaments of the IPU:

Reaffirm that democracy is a universal value and that, as a system of government, democracy contributes to the fulfillment of human potential, the eradication of poverty, the development of open and peaceful societies and the improvement of relations among nations; *and*
Call on parliaments and all public institutions to take action and continually work to attain and uphold the principles and values established in the Universal Declaration on Democracy;

Those principles and values include the rule of law, human rights, respect for diversity and the equitable inclusion of all citizens, gender equality, and the protection of persons

with disabilities, minorities and vulnerable or marginalized groups of peoples. They are essential for democracy in general, and essential for free and fair elections in particular.

Around the world, citizens continue to see elections as a central moment in the democratic process. We carry a heavy responsibility to ensure that electoral processes are carried out in accordance with the highest standards. As you meet to take stock of the CIS Convention on Standards for Democratic Elections, I encourage to draw upon the experience from other regions. I am certain that this conference can be a further step in this direction and reaffirm the IPU's willingness to support your efforts.

Thank you.