



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Address by the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Martin Chungong

to the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee

3 September, 2015

Your Excellency, Ambassador Murmokaité, Chairperson of the CTC,
Distinguished members of the CTC,
Mr. Executive Director of CTED,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my distinct honour as the IPU Secretary General to address the CTC. Just yesterday in this very room I addressed the UN Security Council's 1540 Committee and realized that we have convergent agendas. We live in troubling times, with terrorism rearing its ugly head and featuring high on the international agenda. The work of the CTC, along with other relevant stakeholders, will be crucial in stemming the tide of terrorism and making this a safer and more peaceful world for people everywhere on the planet.

Let me tell you a little bit about the Inter-Parliamentary Union – the IPU. Our Organization was founded in 1889, which makes it the longest standing multilateral political organization in the world.

So what is the IPU? The IPU's founding fathers were inspired by a vision of a world where there were no wars and where differences could be resolved through dialogue and negotiation. They believed in the value of parliamentary diplomacy, which has proved its worth over the decades, not least during the Cold War.

The IPU brings together the world's parliaments, and currently has 166 Members. Each IPU Member is responsible for overseeing their respective government's action, drafting national laws and defending the interests of the people. Parliaments are the ultimate repository of legitimacy and the basis of that legitimacy lies in the public's trust in its democratic principles.

The relationship between national and international law in countering terrorism is crucial and contingent on the ability of the national legislative process to incorporate international counter-terrorism obligations into the national legal framework. At the end of the day, all international commitments undertaken by governments ultimately have to be ratified by parliament before entering into force.

In its resolutions, the Security Council has highlighted the importance of national legislative bodies in international efforts to counter terrorism, especially in resolution 1373 (2001). In that resolution, the UN calls on Member States to increase cooperation and to fully implement relevant international resolutions and protocols. The obligations ensuing from these resolutions require the validation of the national parliament.

We have welcomed the emphasis of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in 2006 on the role of the parliaments in the adoption of legislation to implement the Strategy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Terrorism jeopardizes democratic principles and undermines human rights. It causes untold human suffering and shreds the very fabric of society. That is why the crime of terrorism has become the focus of the world's legislatures. Over the past two decades, the IPU has adopted no fewer than 12 resolutions related to terrorism, which have all highlighted the need for more cooperation with relevant UN organizations to support the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

Most recently in Hanoi, at our 132nd Assembly in March this year, IPU Members unanimously adopted a resolution on the role of parliaments in combating all terrorist acts perpetrated by organizations such as Daesh and Boko Haram. The resolution requested parliaments to use legislative channels to contribute to the implementation of all relevant UN resolutions.

The time has come to translate these pronouncements into tangible action. The IPU's Member Parliaments have asked me, as IPU Secretary General, to cooperate more closely with the CTC, the CTED and UNODC.

The Hanoi resolution also invites me to contact, on an annual basis, parliaments that have not ratified the relevant international treaties and to encourage them to do so.

Since I assumed office last year, I have commissioned my staff to study all possible avenues to further support the international efforts to counter terrorism. The complexity of this scourge urgently requires global coordination, especially between the executive and legislative bodies on the national and international levels. The role of the IPU in this regard is to ensure that national parliaments no longer stand apart from the international efforts to counter terrorism.

The world's national parliaments are willing to support the UN's efforts, especially in the context of your Committee. The Declaration adopted yesterday in this very building by the Speakers of the world's parliaments who were in New York for their Fourth World Conference condemns all forms and manifestations of terrorism. In it, the world's parliamentary leaders commit to doing their utmost to enhance effective cooperation and support implementation of all relevant UN resolutions, conventions and agreements to combat terrorism.

The IPU is currently studying a variety of avenues that can further strengthen its support to the relevant international efforts.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to outline some of these avenues for cooperation between the two organizations. IPU Assemblies convene twice a year about 1,200 parliamentarians to discuss global issues and examine the role of parliamentary diplomacy in their efforts to tackle these challenges. These Assemblies could provide a good platform to coordinate the worldwide efforts on implementation of international law and UN resolutions directly with the legislative bodies. They could also be used to discuss in an open and proactive manner the implementation of the Counter Terrorism Strategy.

By their very nature, parliaments have the widest network of citizens, which makes parliamentarians the right vehicle for transmitting information and knowledge about the root causes of terrorism and counter-terrorism efforts. Parliamentarians are thus on the front line in these efforts to prevent and counter terrorism. Through our cooperation, the CTC can tap into this global network and access the grassroots.

The IPU has a long history of providing parliamentary capacity-building programmes. This relationship, built on trust, between the IPU and its Members, facilitates our technical work on the ground in countries that are either in conflict, emerging from conflict or in transition. I

believe that the combination of the IPU's tailor-made programmes with the UN Counter Terrorism Strategy's capacity-building programmes can make for a very happy marriage. The CTED could help build the capacity of parliaments in the area of counter-terrorism by providing expertise to assist members of parliament with drafting counter-terrorism laws.

Distinguished members of the CTC,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As I mentioned earlier, ratification and implementation of international commitments are key preconditions for effective efforts to combat terrorism. If not, they remain a dead letter. The IPU stands ready to help you monitor ratification through its Member Parliaments that have not yet ratified as we currently do with other UN instruments, such as CEDAW.

Parliaments should also be involved in the review of country reports on implementation of your counter-terrorism resolutions. This is already the case, for example, with the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review, with which we enjoy close collaboration.

As an organization that upholds and promotes human rights, the IPU feels that it is necessary to consider counter-terrorism efforts from all sides, including from the human rights perspective. All relevant efforts therefore must be consistent with human rights norms.

At this juncture, I would like to state emphatically that terrorism is not specific to any region in the world. Fortunately, the UN and the IPU have not fallen into the trap of branding any region a hub for terrorism.

Both organizations uphold a fundamental principle which is enshrined in the preamble of the Counter Terrorism Strategy, as well as in the IPU's most recent resolution on the matter, namely that terrorism cannot and should not be associated with or attributed to any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. I am a strong believer that terrorism should be countered with legitimacy and justice.

Distinguished members of the CTC,

The IPU and the CTC share similar goals and can develop synergies to achieve them together for mutual benefit of both bodies. The Plan of Action generated by the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, which explicitly recognizes the role of parliaments, and the IPU's own Parliamentary Plan of Action on Counter-Terrorism, provide a solid foundation on which to build a fruitful partnership.

As a global problem, terrorism requires a coordinated global response involving all relevant stakeholders. I am convinced – and I believe you are too – that parliaments are key actors in the equation. The IPU is reaching out to some of those actors – CTED, UNODC and the UN Security Council's 1540 Committee within the UN family.

As you are aware, Mr. Executive Director, the IPU will be holding its 133rd Assembly in October this year in Geneva. Two special events are foreseen at that Assembly dedicated specifically to terrorism. One is an expert hearing to prepare for the adoption of an IPU resolution on "Terrorism: The need to enhance global cooperation against the threat to democracy and individual rights". I am very pleased that your Committee will be represented at that Assembly.

The other event is a panel discussion on "Parliamentary action in meeting international commitments to counter terrorism". Also for this event we have invited international experts to bring their expertise to bear on the deliberations.

So, distinguished members, as you can see, terrorism is high on the IPU's agenda. We are examining the feasibility of establishing a unit within our Secretariat to deal specifically with this matter and are in talks with our UN and other partners about providing funding and expertise. It is our hope that we can work together as partners to rid the world of this scourge.

I thank you.