



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Statement

Mr. Martin Chungong
Secretary General

**High Level Political Forum on
sustainable development
United Nations
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President,

I am gratified to address this meeting today as its main theme, poverty eradication, relates very closely to a major debate that over 700 parliamentarians from 132 national parliaments had at the recent 136h IPU Assembly in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The general debate of that assembly was entitled *Redressing inequalities: delivering on dignity and well-being for all*. It concluded with a visionary outcome document, the Dhaka Communiqué, which highlights the structural causes of economic, social and political inequalities, and provides a set of policy recommendations to address this problem.

The Dhaka Communiqué' makes is clear that reversing the trend of growing inequalities is a necessary condition for the implementation of the SDGs. It also recognizes that, within a finite world, inequality cannot be resolved merely by growing the economy exponentially in the hope that a rising sea will lift all boats, as the saying goes.

What is needed most urgently is a pro-active effort at *redistribution* – of wealth, and with that, of power – which can only happen if parliaments and indeed all other decision-making centres at national and global levels represent all people in our societies, including the poor and the marginalized, more effectively. This, to my mind, must start with a better

representation of women at all levels and in all sectors, from the political system to the economy as a whole.

The Dhaka Communiqué's real sub-text is that poverty and attendant inequalities are not an economic problem, strictly speaking: they are a *political* problem requiring a political solution. To build the political will we need to bridge the gap between commitments of principle and action, we need to democratize the power structure.

Mr. President,

Let me report now on a number of initiatives IPU has undertaken to mobilize parliaments behind the SDGs, as well as on some of the lessons learned. The short of it is that while we are advancing, the road is long and steeply uphill.

As I announced last year, each spring session of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs is designed to prepare parliamentarians for the HLPF, assessing the effectiveness of parliamentary action and sharing experiences that can be replicated elsewhere. The Committee session that took place in April highlighted the importance of putting all policy proposals that governments submit to parliaments to the test of the SDGs, checking how each draft law, including the budget bill, fits into the national plan for the SDGs.

From the UN Committee session and many regional workshops for parliamentarians IPU organized over the last 12 months, I can say with confidence that the SDGs have begun to register with parliaments almost everywhere, though generally less in the parliaments of developed countries. Some parliaments have constituted a committee or a caucus to help integrate the SDGs as an interlinked framework that cannot be dealt with in silos. Other parliaments have chosen to assign clusters of SDGs to each portfolio committee. A few parliaments have adopted a

motion formally calling on the government to draw up a national plan for the SDGs and to submit a regular progress report.

Going forward, we will need more information about the *results* of this deeper knowledge of the SDGs and of growing efforts to institutionalize the SDGs in parliament.

As part of our efforts to strengthen accountability for the SDGs, early this year we sent a questionnaire to the forty-four parliaments of the countries volunteering a national report to this session. The questionnaire was designed to alert parliaments to the upcoming review process and to report back on their engagement in the national reviews. Only nine parliaments were consulted as the national report was being prepared, and only three of them had an opportunity to review the report before it was submitted to the HLPF.

These numbers indicate there is still a long way to go for the practice of engaging parliaments in the global review of the SDGs. Our goal is 100% compliance: each national review should be conducted in close consultation with the parliament and the conclusions of the HLPF review debated in each parliament afterwards.

On a more positive note, I am happy to report that, partly through our efforts, 34 parliaments are represented in this HLPF session with some 80 members in attendance. Here again, we are far from the ideal where each national delegation comes with one or two members of parliament, if not more. Still, since the numbers have doubled in just one year, we can certainly speak of progress.

Last but not least, a positive picture is emerging from the parliamentary response to climate change. A study IPU was part of, published in May, shows that there are now 1,200 climate change or climate change-related laws worldwide. On the other

hand, the study shows that climate change needs to be integrated better into mainstream development strategies, since only four in ten countries have factored climate change explicitly into their development plans.

IPU is working to mobilize parliaments behind ambitious CO2 national reduction commitments according to the Paris Agreement.

President,

There is an old maxim: quantity determines quality. IPU will continue to do all it can to engage as many parliaments and parliamentarians as possible in the global effort for the SDGs, and in all relevant national processes, until we can see real change in the lives of people and in the health of the planet.

Thank you.