



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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

### to the UN Security Council's 1540 Committee

New York, 2 September 2015

Your Excellency, Ambassador Román Oyarzun Marchesi,  
Chairperson of the 1540 Committee,  
Distinguished members of the Committee,  
Colleagues of the UN Secretariat,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you here today. I welcome the opportunity to interact with the 1540 Committee and share my thoughts on how parliaments and UN bodies can work together to advance our mutual interests.

The IPU is the world organization of national parliaments with many regional parliamentary organizations engaging as Associate Members. The relationship between the IPU and its Members allows for effective communication and regular meetings with national parliaments.

The IPU also enjoys a close relationship with the United Nations at both the political operational and levels. A number of General Assembly resolutions define this as a "strategic" relationship that should span "all fields of work", including peace and security. The Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament will today be adopting a Declaration in which they pledge to expand and strengthen their cooperation with the UN and other partners in the global efforts to combat terrorism.

As you may know, the IPU was founded on the vision of a world where dialogue and negotiation would avert war and lead to a more peaceful society. Your Committee and the IPU therefore share common interests on the global agenda.

Combating WMDs, in particular nuclear weapons, has therefore been high on IPU Member Parliaments' agenda over the past decade. Increasingly, there is a sense among legislators that ridding the world of nuclear weapons is not only their duty, but also a goal that can be achieved.

As you said, Your Excellency, in 2014, the IPU adopted a resolution on "*Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: The contribution of parliaments*". It was a milestone in a cycle which began 20 years earlier, in 1994, with a resolution on "*The importance of adhering to the obligations specified in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons*". Since 2009, the topic has been addressed by the IPU every year - either through a resolution, a declaration, a panel discussion or a handbook for parliamentarians.

As a key concern of IPU Member Parliaments and the people they represent, Security Council resolution 1540 is perhaps even more important today than at its adoption in 2004. The inroads made by groups such as Daesh or Boko Haram across continents and in the minds of thousands of would-be “martyrs” around the world are ample testimony.

The danger of terrorist groups using WMDs to advance their criminal causes is very real. Indeed a few weeks ago, there were reports that Daesh may have used chemical weapons against Kurdish Peshmerga fighters in northern Iraq. These events underscore the need for all sources of WMDs in the world to be identified and systematically guarded or destroyed. Important steps have been taken and there have been some important victories. However, much more needs to be done.

Resolution 1540 has a strong legislative component and requires UN Member States to adopt and implement appropriate and effective laws to prohibit and prosecute such activities by non-State actors. We welcome the fact that the resolution provides sufficient flexibility for each country to decide on the most appropriate implementation framework in accordance with its Constitution. These can take the form of stand-alone laws on specific categories of WMDs or omnibus “WMDs laws”.

As you all know, the role of parliaments is to adopt laws, represent citizens in the political process, and exercise oversight of government. At the end of the day, it is the responsibility of all parliamentarians to do their utmost to enhance the security of their citizens. Implementing Security Council resolutions such as 1540, a legally binding obligation, is one concrete way to do that.

However, implementation of resolution 1540 depends to a large extent on how parliaments are able to exercise their constitutional functions. It also depends, and this is a crucial challenge, on their level of awareness of the presence of WMDs in their country and region and the risks associated with non-State actors obtaining such weapons.

Of course, every parliament is different and both capacities and awareness will vary from one to another, not to mention the diversity between members of parliament on the matter. However, to successfully implement resolution 1540, there is a need for a concerted and sustained action to ensure that everyone understands the urgency of the situation and has all the necessary information.

The IPU is pleased to be able to reach out to the global parliamentary community. Its institutional mechanisms, such as its statutory Assemblies, attract over 1,000 MPs twice a year. Its Standing Committees on Peace and International Security and on UN Affairs are also forums where the topic can be discussed, and follow-up action envisaged and monitored.

Dear Members of the Committee,

Security Council resolution 1540 was first acknowledged by the IPU in a 2004 resolution entitled "*The role of parliaments in strengthening multilateral regimes for non-proliferation of weapons and for disarmament in the light of new security challenges*". This was followed by other resolutions on nuclear weapons and terrorism. At the risk of repeating myself, let me underscore how important resolution 1540 is for our constituency: parliaments.

In order to enhance awareness of resolution 1540 among IPU Members, in October 2013 the IPU Committee on UN Affairs organized a panel discussion which focused specifically on this issue. The then Chair of Committee 1540, Ambassador Oh Joon of the Republic of Korea, was among the presenters.

The session highlighted the key role that legislators must play to put in place the necessary legal instruments to help protect their citizens from terrorism and its devastating effects. It also underscored that much remains to be done in terms of raising awareness among MPs and generating parliamentary action in this area.

All of these are already small steps but you could argue, and it would be true, that a few resolutions and one debate are not enough to sustainably mobilize parliaments around the issue of WMDs.

It is one thing to get MPs to pay attention to the issue when they come to IPU Assemblies, and quite another to get them carry forward the debate when they return to their respective parliaments. While it is quite possible that many MPs are concerned with this issue, it is hard to assess how well MPs are informed of their own country's WMDs-related risks and their government's plans to counter the risk of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons falling in the wrong hands.

This issue likely receives the most attention in parliaments of those relatively few countries that are at a fairly high risk of a WMDs attack. In other parliaments, MPs tend to be distracted with other national priorities seen as more important by their constituents.

Perspectives change depending on where people are in the world, so that climate change, unemployment, national debt, natural disaster or health crises like Ebola can be extremely high on citizens' agendas and may well be perceived as more tangible issues closer to home.

When approached by members of your Committee into looking at possible ways to mobilize MPs around the non-proliferation of WMDs in the long term, the IPU thought of several tools and processes which, taken together, could constitute a programme of work over several years. Actually, the practices I will outline have proved their utility and efficiency over the years in activities the IPU conducted with various partners such as the UN Human Rights Council and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

One approach is organizing regional workshops. In our experience, the regional approach engaging parliaments on a specific issue and achieving tangible results have proven to be very effective.

Indeed, the spread of WMDs and related materials can best be stemmed at the regional level where countries often come together to discuss shared security and cross border concerns. In addition, lessons learned at the national level are more likely to be transferred and take root within the same region where countries often share similar legal traditions and political cultures. In addition, at the regional level, MPs may look at the issue very differently depending on whether there is at least one country in the region where non-State actors are clearly active, or on whether the government there is engaged in a counter-terrorism operation or not.

Regional workshops could then feed into national workshops to deepen the discussions and take concrete steps to adopt effective legislation.

Linked to regional and national workshops/seminars, another useful tool to support action going forward may come from one or more case studies of parliaments. The actual ways and means in which resolution 1540 applies to parliaments and the capacities of parliaments to support the implementation of the resolution have never been examined in depth.

Whereas the regional workshops may help uncover some of these issues, there is a need to look at parliaments at different levels of development and in different political and regulatory settings to see what factors enable parliaments to take proactive action as well as the institutional and legal obstacles that may stand in the way. Among other things, each case study would look at the legal frameworks and regulations in place in a given country, identify possible gaps, and look at how parliament may be able to fill those gaps.

There are very few tools available to assess the actual degree of awareness and involvement of decision-makers in a specific issue. Surveys can help reveal how much MPs know and appreciate about WMDs, and would provide a strong tool to target further action to specific parliaments, tailor key messages to the actual knowledge level and political sensibility of MPs, and monitor progress in terms of MPs' involvement and knowledge of this issue over time.

The IPU currently has some 20 Handbooks for Parliamentarians produced jointly with UN partners on parliamentary action needed to implement international commitments in various areas, such as nuclear disarmament, refugee protection, CEDAW, rights of the child, IHL, statelessness and migration, inter alia.

A similar type of publication on the implementation of resolution 1540 would also be an extremely valuable tool, and would provide a solid background of the resolution and highlight points such as:

- Why all MPs should be concerned with this issue, regardless of nationality, level of development, or other consideration;
- The legal requirements that are established by resolution 1540 and the monitoring machinery that has been put in place at the global level;
- The role of MPs in the implementation of the resolution,
- the resources available to them, and the available channels to request and receive assistance; and
- Lastly, the publication should provide examples of effective legislation and regulations already in place around the world that can be replicated elsewhere.

In conclusion, there is no doubt in our mind, at least not in mine, that the IPU can be supportive of your success on this issue in many tangible ways. I have only scratched the surface of the myriad activities that can be conducted successfully.

I would also like you to know what the IPU has planned to do in relation with counter terrorism and implementation of UNSC resolution 1540 before the end of the year.

During its 133<sup>rd</sup> Assembly in October 2015, the IPU will be addressing the issue of terrorism on two occasions. The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security will organize an expert hearing in preparation for its next resolution on "*Terrorism: the need to enhance global cooperation against the threat to democracy and individual rights*".

A panel discussion on “Parliamentary action in meeting international commitments to counter terrorism” will also take place. I see that panel as a way for counter terrorism bodies to let parliaments know what is needed from them to ensure implementation through law-making, policy-shaping and oversight. Indeed, I believe that both these activities would be of interest to you and that implementation of resolution 1540 will be addressed in terms of the need for cooperation and international commitments to combat terrorism.

Lastly, and this is a more direct action towards implementation of 1540, the IPU, with funding from the UN Office of Disarmament Affairs, is planning to organize a regional seminar to engage African national parliaments in the implementation of the resolution in Algiers (Algeria) in December 2015. The event will:

- Raise awareness of the resolution among parliamentarians;
- Facilitate the exchange of best legislative and regulatory practices; and
- Provide technical assistance to strengthen the legislative and oversight capacities of parliaments at a later stage.

While the potential and political will are there to make all of this happen, any further action is, of course, contingent on the availability of resources. Our valuable partnership with the UN can be very helpful in taking our ideas and initiatives forward.

I hope our exchange with you today will flesh out some of the possibilities I have highlighted. I especially look forward to learning from your own experience in outreach and awareness-raising and how that may help us at the IPU overcome some of the challenges that I have referred to.

Thank you.