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## Statement by the President Hon. Abdelwahad Radi

### Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (Item 126)

United Nations General Assembly  
19 May 2014

Thank you, Mr. President,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I address you here today to speak about the relationship between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), over which I am honoured to preside. With a membership of 164 national parliaments, the IPU is today the only truly global organization of parliaments.

It is also the oldest multilateral organization around and will soon be celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The IPU came into being in 1889 in a quest for peace and democracy as an alternative to war. It thus was a precursor of the United Nations, which emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War. Clearly, we have common ideals and aims.

The relationship between our two organizations was formally cemented in 1996 through the signature of a cooperation agreement. Since then, I am pleased to say that the UN and the IPU have developed a mutually beneficial relationship which, I have no doubt, will grow from strength to strength.

Today, we live in a world where the prospects for peace, democracy and development have never been so close within reach, and yet they continue to elude so many. The UN itself is being challenged by developments seemingly beyond its control; and new forums, networks and social media are making governance at both national and global levels a much more complex enterprise than ever before. While crucial issues such as nuclear disarmament continue to languish, new and more menacing issues have emerged, not least climate change.

Yet amid all this turmoil and change, one thing is clear: the UN must remain at the centre of global governance. For that to happen, national parliaments must play an enhanced role in ensuring that what is decided here makes sense to citizens at large, reflects their views and deepest aspirations, and ultimately gets carried out at the national level. That is what this relationship is all about.

The resolution that is before us today, and the report of the UN Secretary-General, are testimony to our blossoming relationship. They demonstrate tangible progress in our relationship in just two years, in virtually all policy areas, as well as the need for much more to be done.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you who spoke today in support of our common cause. I beg your indulgence to highlight a few examples of how our work together can make a difference, particularly as we approach 2015, when a new global agenda for development will emerge.

Tracking the UN-led process, the IPU has brought the global debate on the future agenda to parliaments. From those discussions, we have developed strong positions on the need for a new economic model of development centred on human well-being, and not economic growth as an end in itself, on the critical need for a goal on democratic governance as both an enabler and an *end* of sustainable development, and on the need for a comprehensive goal on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Each of these is a key to help open the door to more opportunities, greater freedoms and human rights for all. We have made our case before the Open Working Group, ECOSOC, and other debates held here in New York. At the same time, we are asking our Members to engage directly with their governments at home.

Do not misunderstand me: it is not the intention of the IPU to tell the UN what to do. Far from it. Our goal is simply to make sure that parliaments are fully aware of what is taking place here before the deal is sealed, and that they hold debates among themselves and with their government representatives so that, at the end of the day, there is full national ownership of the process.

Once a decision is made, on the post-2015 agenda or any decision here, implementation must follow. Here too the role of parliaments will be essential. After all, they are the ones that hold governments to account for their commitments at the UN; and they adopt the necessary legislation to move those commitments forward, including through the budget process.

Accountability does not come naturally: especially to those held to account, which tend to put up some resistance. Yet accountability is the single most important factor to make sure that commitments are honoured. It is the role of parliaments to hold governments up to scrutiny. We need to support parliaments in that role. The IPU is doing what it can to build the capacities of parliaments around the world, and of course the UN is doing that too, particularly through UNDP.

But the needs of parliaments far outweigh our ability to assist them. We will need a much more concerted effort by the donor community and other partners to unleash the full potential of parliaments everywhere to perform their oversight and legislative roles. The UN can assist by engaging their country teams to work more closely with parliaments, for example, by making sure parliaments are involved in national review processes or post-conflict political dialogues.

Thanks to the growing practice of national reviews here at the UN, within the CEDAW Committee, the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights Council, and soon the High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development, we now have an opportunity for parliaments to help link national-level accountability to the global level. The practice of having parliaments debate the reports that governments submit to the UN, of allowing parliamentarians to participate in the actual reviews and then report back to colleagues on their outcomes, and help ensure follow-up and implementation of recommendations that emerge from these exercises, may well become one of best ways yet to engage parliaments in the work of the UN.

To help chart the course ahead and take our relationship to the next level, the IPU has taken two major initiatives, both of which are reflected in this resolution. The first, of an institutional nature, is the establishment of a parliamentary Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs as a central coordinating body to help mainstream the UN agenda through the IPU and its Member Parliaments. This is a unique structure to help provide a critical perspective on global issues and facilitate debate on those issues within national parliaments.

The second initiative is the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, which as the resolution indicates, will take place in New York next year, just before the UN Summit that will herald the start of a new era for sustainable development.

The Speakers' Conference will provide a golden opportunity to galvanize political will for the new global agenda, and more generally for our two communities – governments and parliaments – to join hands towards achieving our common objectives in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect. It will be useful for this Conference to be acknowledged in the modalities resolution for the UN Summit.

Mr. President,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

This is very likely my last statement before the General Assembly in my capacity as President of the IPU.

Let me take this opportunity therefore to warmly thank the Permanent Mission of my own country, Morocco, for the tremendous support it has provided to us over the past three years.

I also wish to thank again each of the official sponsors of this resolution, and all those who have been working behind the scenes, UN and IPU staff, colleagues around the world, and everyone else who, in their own way – small or large - is making a difference for the good of us all.

Thank you.