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Report of the President

(a) On his activities since the 196th session of the Governing Council

In the interval between the previous IPU Assembly and now, I have been in regular contact with the IPU Secretary General on a number of dossiers. We consult with each other regularly on matters on the IPU's radar screen and coordinate the messages we send to the IPU membership.

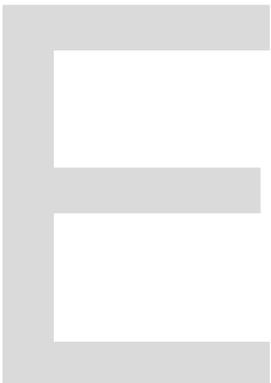
On 18 May I travelled to New York for a meeting with the Permanent Representatives of Morocco and other countries to the UN in New York to campaign for a strong reference to the role of parliaments in the Declaration due to be adopted in September on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As you know now, those efforts did not go in vain and the political Declaration does indeed make a very clear reference to that role under means of implementation.

A few days later, I sent a written message to the participants of the 2nd Pan-European Festival Marathon held in the Russian Federation underlining the importance of the event as a step towards enhancing understanding between peoples and strengthening peace and unity among nations. I identified culture as a fundamental aspect of human civilization and encouraged further cooperation and interaction in the sphere of culture, in order to strengthen the development and existence of the human society.

A landmark event this year was the IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians held in Tokyo on 27 and 28 May. My presence there was a sign of my support and solidarity in defining and promoting the youth agenda within the IPU and beyond. In my opening speech addressing the leaders of today and tomorrow I expressed my conviction that "democracy must be enriched and revitalised with the dynamism, creativity, energy, openness and leadership of the youth".

The Conference themes - peace and prosperity - were profoundly correlated with political engagement due to the fact that democracy delivers both peace and prosperity. I encouraged the young MP's to use the Conference as a platform to seek positive change through creative ideas and policies that would halt and reverse the troubling trends we were witnessing and to develop innovative and youth-led solutions."

On the heels of that event, on 30 May I attended the Young Parliamentarians' Global Opinion Summit held also in Tokyo in collaboration with the Worldwide Support for Development (WSD). Its theme was "Bringing a Youth Perspective to Development Cooperation". In my speech to the public, I first illustrated how the whole issue of development cooperation was close to the heart of the IPU, going to the core of its work on building peace, justice and democracy around the world.



Turning to the topic of youth participation in development cooperation, I first mentioned the shift towards modern development cooperation, which placed States at the heart of their own agendas instead of having others decide for them. That shift must also occur vis-à-vis young people. Today's reality was that the decisions which affected how young people would live and work – and which might make the difference between whether they would live or die – were taken by a different generation in a different place. I proposed to stop seeing young people as a problem or passive recipients and become more flexible and responsive to their needs. The world should start listening to their concerns, their solutions and including them in the decision-making process. That was why the role of young MPs was a crucial one, because they represented the vital link in the chain of listening and acting.

On 1 and 2 June, I presided over the Third Preparatory Committee of the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament at IPU Headquarters in Geneva. The meeting agreed on the final modalities of the Conference and entrusted the Secretariat with finalizing a draft outcome declaration to be adopted at that Conference.

Still in Geneva, on 2 June I made a Skype presentation to the launch ceremony of *The 2015 Global Climate Legislation Study*. The Study is a unique reference tool for parliamentarians, diplomats and researchers alike. Its fifth edition covers climate change legislation in 99 countries and includes a foreword written by me. For the first time ever, the IPU was closely associated with the preparation of the Study and ensured its broad circulation to parliaments.

The launch ceremony had taken place in Bonn, on the sidelines of a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiation session. In my presentation, I emphasized the existing linkages between the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai in May, the SDGs process culminating in the Summit of Heads of State and Government in September in New York, and the UNFCCC session to be held in Paris at the end of the year. I expressed the hope that the Climate Legislation Study would stimulate parliamentary action to provide a common legislative framework for following up those processes on the national level.

On 3 June I met with Ms. Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Disaster Risk Reduction to discuss avenues of cooperation between our organizations. For several years, the IPU has been working closely with UNISDR on the issue of disaster risk reduction, producing handbooks and other tools for parliamentarians, convening specialized side events in the context of IPU Assemblies, preparing the groundwork for the 2014 IPU resolution on risk-resilient development, inter alia.

The IPU and UNISDR had also jointly organized a parliamentary meeting in the context of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai, March 2015), and the outcome of the Conference specifically calls for the active engagement of parliaments and MPs in the implementation of the new international commitments in that area. During the meeting, we agreed that there was scope for important collaboration ahead, but that this would be contingent on additional funding provided to the IPU. The UN Special Representative promised to look into this closely. Following the meeting, a joint IPU-UNISDR working session was held in New York with parliamentary leaders, on the occasion of the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

The IPU immediately issued a press note on 22 June condemning the bomb attack that had been carried out by suspected Taliban militants against the Afghan Parliament, precisely on the day MPs were due to consider the appointment of a new Defence Minister. I called for greater support and protection for MPs. I stated that the Afghan people, in the face of terrorism and efforts to undermine the fledgling democracy in the country, needed all the support possible to be able to safely carry out their work to oversee government, represent their constituents and to legislate effectively.

On 4 June, I travelled to Rome for meetings with IPU honorary President, Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Ms. Laura Boldrini, and President of the Senate, Mr. Pietro Grasso. I urged them to lobby for a strong reference to the role of parliaments in the UN Summit Declaration on the SDGs and expressed the IPU's deep appreciation for the good relations it had always enjoyed with the Italian Parliament and encouraged the parliament to endorse the IPU's Common Principles for Parliamentary Support. I later met with the Italian Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mario Giro, to stress the same message.

I attended the ECOSOC High-Level Segment in New York on 9 and 10 July, specifically the panel on strengthening and building institutions for policy integration in the post-2015 era. In my address, I stressed the essential role of parliaments in strengthening and building institutions for policy integration in the post-2015 era. As the central institution of government, parliaments must be strengthened to ensure the success of the post-2015 agenda. That was not to say that parliaments did not face any challenges. For example, while the universal goals might be agreed, there was no shared vision in parliaments around the world on how to carry those goals forward. A crucial aspect was thus the institutionalization of the SDGs in parliaments as early and deeply as possible, which was only possible through reforms of political systems. For that, a dedicated structure overseeing the SDGs was needed, for example an SDGs committee or advisory group.

I stressed the importance of involving MPs more systematically in the design and review of national sustainable development plans in order to make sure that all voices were heard. That would also lead to more successful implementation of the goals. I concluded by stating that national policies for the SDGs would largely depend on a supportive global environment, and on access to high quality, independent analysis and data to inform the legislative and oversight process. In sum, the question of strengthening and building the institutions for policy integration in the post-2015 era applied to parliaments in both developed and developing countries.

On 15 July, the IPU released a press note lauding the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreed with the Islamic Republic of Iran as an historic agreement and a major achievement paving the way for greater peace and stability and reducing tensions over nuclear issues. The note reiterated that the IPU was committed to a nuclear weapon-free world, conflict resolution and peace-building. That agreement was a tribute to the leadership, vision and courage of all those involved in making it happen and was the result of a commitment to dialogue – upon which the IPU was premised. Peace was undoubtedly best achieved through political dialogue involving all voices.

I was invited to participate in the celebrations marking the Golden Jubilee of the independence of the Maldives on 26 July. I called on the President of the Indian island-nation, Mr. Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom, and the Speaker of the People's Majlis, Mr. Abdulla Maseeh Mohammed, reiterating the IPU's commitment to continue working with the parliament.

I attended the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament on 29 and 30 August in New York. The theme of the meeting was *Innovating for gender equality: Making development, peace and democracy a reality for women and men*. The Meeting celebrated its tenth anniversary and thus took stock of its accomplishments over the past decade.

On the heels of that Meeting, I presided over the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament from 31 August to 2 September, also at UN Headquarters in New York. The Conference – a quinquennial event – was organized in cooperation with the UN as part of the series of high-level meetings in the run-up to the UN Summit on the SDGs. On 31 August I hosted a cocktail reception for all Speakers of Parliament at the UN.

The theme of the General Debate was *Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development: Building the world the people want*. The Outcome Declaration was adopted unanimously on the final day. In my inaugural address, I urged the Speakers of the world to show visionary leadership and seize the unique opportunity of the post-2015 development agenda to leave no-one behind.

But above and beyond the SDGs, I encouraged them to have an in-depth discussion of the challenges facing the world today: terrorism and conflict, migration and youth disenchantment, to name but a few. By giving voice to all of their constituencies – women, indigenous peoples, youth and other marginalized groups – they could find innovative solutions to age-old problems plaguing humanity.

In the margins of this major event, I held a number of bilateral meetings with delegations from Belarus, Burundi, China, Cyprus, Iran, Hungary, Lithuania, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Parlantino, Speakers from the South-Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Turkmenistan and Viet Nam.

I was invited to address a reception in honour of Viet Nam's 70th national day at UN Headquarters on 1 September. The following morning, I participated as a guest of honour in a ceremony of dedication of the commemorative plaque at the Tree of Peace and Unity in the gardens of UN Headquarters.

At the invitation of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA), I paid a three-day official visit to Thailand in mid-September where I met with a number of senior government and parliamentary figures. These included the Deputy Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the NLA. I was also invited to attend a briefing for the diplomatic community in Bangkok on the new roadmap and timelines in place with a view to future elections.

On 27 September, I addressed the UN Summit of Heads of State and Government at which the SDGs were officially adopted. In my speech, I told the world's leaders that the Summit presented a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to steer the world towards a safer, sustainable, inclusive and prosperous path. I added that "parliaments are crucial to the success of the SDGs" and concluded that, ultimately, it is "visionary political leadership that will propel these goals forward and translate them from words into action".

Lastly, I was invited to speak at one of the six interactive dialogues held during the UN Summit, on "Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions to achieve sustainable development". The event was chaired by the President of the Republic of Korea and the Prime Minister of Chile. As the representative of the world's parliamentary community in a gathering of Heads of States or Government, I used the opportunity to underscore the need for the legislative branch to be more independent of the executive, and duly equipped with the capacity to ensure accountability and monitoring of the SDGs. I stressed that the legislative authority that only parliaments possess is what would make the SDGs, as a voluntary global framework, more enforceable at the national level.