

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE TO THE 122nd ASSEMBLY
OF THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY UNION
Bangkok, 27 March 2010**

*[Delivered by Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General,
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development]*

It is a pleasure to greet the Interparliamentary Union. I attach great importance to the role of parliamentarians in meeting the needs, interests and aspirations of the world's citizens. I welcome the IPU's support for the United Nations and commend your leadership on the pressing challenges of our time.

The opening words of the UN Charter, "We the Peoples," remind us that parliaments and the UN share a common responsibility to strive for the betterment of common people, in particular the most vulnerable. Your focus at this year's assembly on political reconciliation and good governance is thus timely and apt. Parliaments, at their best, embody the principles of dialogue, democracy and the rule of law, which are inextricably tied to reconciliation and good governance.

Your chosen theme also reflects the important insight that elections are not, by themselves, enough to make a democracy. What matters, too, is the quality of governance after the ballots have been counted. Parliaments play a central role in ensuring good governance. They pass laws aimed at building just societies and relieving ethnic, religious and economic tensions. Their control over budgets can ensure that resources are distributed fairly. And they can hold governments to account, thereby countering any excessive concentration of power.

However, in many places parliaments face challenges in properly fulfilling these functions. Parliaments often lack of sufficient resources and expertise. At times they are prevented from providing proper checks and balances by the constitutional dominance or manipulation of the executive. And their legitimacy can be undermined in places where they are not representative of the population. Women account for less than 19 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide, and in some multi-ethnic societies, important minority groups are not adequately represented in the legislature -- or not there at all.

In recent years, the United Nations, at the request of Member States, has significantly increased its efforts help parliaments meet these challenges. The UN Development Programme's helps parliaments in well over 60 countries build capacity. We support constitutional reform processes. And our electoral assistance now extends to

dozens of countries. In Nepal, our peace mission's support in 2007 helped Nepalis achieve their long-held vision of establishing a Constituent Assembly that is representative of the country's ethnic and religious mosaic. In pursuing these activities, the United Nations has worked closely with the IPU in Afghanistan, Burundi, Timor-Leste and elsewhere, and I look forward to more such efforts.

Let me also address three other priorities for 2010 on which the IPU has an important role to play.

First, the Millennium Development Goals. With only five years left until the agreed deadline of 2015, it is clear we have to accelerate progress. Parliaments provide the enabling national legislative framework for achieving the MDGs. You are also at the forefront of fighting for improved livelihoods and access to basic services. I look forward to your strong support and input as we prepare for the MDG Summit in September.

Second, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. For several years now, thanks in no small part to the efforts of parliamentarians and civil society, momentum has been building in our work for a world free of nuclear weapons. We need your support now to ensure success in May at the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Third, climate change. Parliamentarians can provide the very foundation for building the green economy. While the private sector will be a big part of the picture, parliaments can produce legislation that establishes incentives for innovation, promotes investment in clean technologies and renewable energy, and develops national plans and goals.

I look forward to strengthening our cooperation across this agenda. Thank you again for your leadership and support, and please accept my best wishes for a successful assembly.