



**Remarks by Mr. Michael Møller
United Nations Under-Secretary-General
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Remarks at the 135th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

“Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict: Parliaments as early responders”

On Monday, 24 October 2016 at 11.00

Room 1, level 1, CICG, Geneva

President Chowdhury

Secretary General Chungong

Distinguished Parliamentarians

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very grateful for the opportunity to address this distinguished assembly once again. The collaboration between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations is growing ever closer. This year’s new cooperation agreement between our two organizations, which was welcomed in a resolution by the General Assembly, has further strengthened the solid foundation on which our collaboration is based. Today’s 135th assembly here in Geneva is an important occasion to look at how we can best operationalize the agreement, especially with a view to accelerating our joint efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The ground-breaking agreements including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on climate change of last year are well into the implementation phase. These agreements converge in their implementation and form our new collective roadmap. The unprecedented speed with which the Paris Climate Agreement was signed and ratified, illustrates the extent to which our Member States and Parliaments remain deeply committed to tackling the pressing issues threatening our planet. The same commitment drives our collective forward movement on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is impressive and a great source of hope how quickly the UN family, our Member States, civil society, the private sector, city administrations and many others have embraced this agenda.

As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasized upon signing of the cooperation agreement with the IPU, we are all working together for the five P's of this new agenda: people, planet, peace, prosperity and partnerships. I would like to add a 6th P: Parliaments must be part of the equation. Thanks to the long-standing collaboration with the IPU, updated by the new collaboration agreement, we have the right framework to help us make the interaction between parliaments and the UN family a leading example of the deep

horizontal and vertical collaboration that is necessary for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

I am also happy to note that the IPU is proactively engaged on our collaboration as your Standing Committee on UN Affairs will be discussing the urgent funding needs of the UN, particularly with respect to development, and the role parliaments can play in ensuring efficient use and sufficient allocation of resources to our work. We have to support our decision makers to make informed decisions.

We need your support to strengthen cross-sectorial and horizontal policies and actions at national, regional and global levels. This new working culture will be essential for the success of the 2030 Agenda. You, as parliamentarians, hold your governments and through them, us, the international organizations, accountable for the implementation of the 17 SDGs. And you are the main funnels through which the international community can reach your constituents. In the words of your Secretary-General, Mr. Martin Chungong, you are the ones that ensure the domestication of international agreements.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The ambitious goals contained in the 2030 Agenda will only be reached if we enhance the promotion and protection of human rights. This connection might sound odd, because none of the 17 SDGs explicitly focus on human rights. But by now, human rights are mainstreamed in almost all policy processes, and they are also mainstreamed across all 17 Goals. The topic of this 135th assembly correctly emphasizes the important connection between human rights violations and conflict. And we all know that conflict in turn diminishes prospects for development.

The UN Secretary-General's Human Rights Up Front initiative emphasizes the importance of engaging with national authorities on human rights concerns and early warning signs. Parliamentarians are often among the first to be aware of human rights violations in their constituencies. In some cases, they become victims themselves, and we need to work together to ensure that they can at all times exercise their crucial mandate. The United Nations' advisors and special envoys on the prevention of genocide and others working at the intersection of human rights violations and the outbreak of conflict can benefit immensely from first-hand information provided by parliamentarians. Collaborative preventive action and policies can avoid violent conflict.

I touched on the domestication of international agreements earlier, and just as parliamentarians can raise the alarm if rights are violated, it is also their responsibility to enshrine legal protection in national laws and ensure that the laws passed are compatible with human rights standards. The implementation of the recommendations in the Universal Periodic Reviews by the Human Rights Council are an obvious entry point for that. Some 60 to 70 per cent of recommendations emanating from the review require parliaments to pass laws, ratify international human rights instruments, or oversee government action.¹ In doing so, you can always rely on the United Nation’s support.

Building strong institutions based on human rights is crucial, particularly in post-conflict societies. The new cooperation agreement between our organizations emphasizes collaboration in “various fields, particularly peace and security, sustainable development, international law, human rights, democracy and gender issues”. These numerous fields converge in the process of peacebuilding, which our world – faced with polarization, isolationism and fragmentation – is in desperate need of. As some politicians try to divide people and build walls, you, as parliamentarians have a strong responsibility to build bridges, to unify and to bring people together, beyond national borders as well.

¹ A/70/917

This is one of the major challenges of our time and we must work together to stop the continuing fragmentation of our societies.

One of the most obvious ways in which we can bring people together is to ensure that everyone's rights and opportunities are protected equally, regardless of their gender. With only just below 23% of MPs worldwide being women, there still is a lot to do to achieve the level of desirable gender parity. The same is true for the United Nations where we also struggle to reach our gender goals. We all have to make further progress to reach gender equality by 2030 and this is an important priority for us here in Geneva.

There are a host of topics on which the IPU and the UN will benefit from ever closer collaboration. I am confident that we will succeed in operationalizing the new collaboration agreement between the IPU and the UN to foster progress across all these different issues of mutual interest. As you know, the United Nations has just appointed a new Secretary-General. Having been a parliamentarian for 17 years himself, I am sure that Mr. Guterres will be very attentive to the powerful prospects of enhanced collaboration with parliaments. And here in Geneva, you can certainly count on our continued close interaction.

Thank you very much.