



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

**43rd Session of the Parliamentary
Assembly of the Francophonie**

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Mr. President,
Madam Parliamentary Secretary General,
Members of Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to address you on the occasion of the 43rd Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Francophonie on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – the world organization of parliaments. The honour is even greater as, you are celebrating your 50th anniversary this year. I take the opportunity to express my warmest congratulations.

Our two parliamentary organizations have been working closely for many years now. We have created synergies that allow us to face together the complex challenges of the contemporary world. Together, we form a united front against the scourges of our time: terrorism, climate change, protracted or forgotten conflicts, to name but a few.

The theme of your general debate coincides perfectly with the theme of IPU's forthcoming Assembly, which will be held in October in St. Petersburg. You have entitled it *Linguistic diversity, cultural diversity, identity(ies)*, while we have opted for the title *Promoting cultural pluralism and peace through inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue*. Evidently, what is common to our respective missions is the will to promote dialogue, diversity and tolerance in the quest for peace.

We are, above all, parliamentary organizations and legislative institutions are at the heart of our actions aimed at promoting democracy. Thus, this year is also a celebratory year for the IPU: on 15 September we will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Democracy as well as the 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy. Now more than ever, we need to strengthen the main pillars of democracy: human rights, the rule of law, free and fair elections, gender equality, the separation of powers, and strong institutions.

The IPU will be launching an appeal for greater democracy on all levels and we sincerely hope the APF will join us in this endeavour. The high point will be the launching in October in St. Petersburg of the 2nd Global Parliamentary Report, a flagship publication, prepared jointly by the IPU and UNDP.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It must be stated that parliaments have a crucial role in the implementation of decisions made on the international level and in their success. Take the example of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed at carrying through sustainable development to the year 2030. The realization of the SDGs requires that an appropriate national legal framework be put in place.

As parliamentarians you must draft specific laws that will provide a solid legislative framework for the 2030 Agenda action plan. You must also ensure, through your oversight functions, that these laws, national policies and strategic plans are implemented by your governments and that the latter report back to you on these matters. Your budgetary role is paramount in allocating financial resources for the implementation of commitments undertaken at the international level.

By way of assistance, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has prepared several tools, including a self-assessment toolkit. These tools will enable you to institutionalize efficiently a plan of action and will also assess the degree of your preparedness. Consequently, your institution will work towards the SDGs and identify the strategies, mechanisms and partnerships needed to implement them effectively.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The IPU was founded by visionaries who dreamt of a world without conflict, where the different peoples of the world would reach agreement through dialogue. We are pursuing this goal relentlessly by providing, twice a year, a platform for dialogue for parliaments and parliamentarians. We promote and work on parliamentary diplomacy in protracted or forgotten conflicts such as the conflicts in Syria and on the Korean Peninsula. Speaking of preventive diplomacy, a second roundtable on water, recently held at IPU Headquarters, brought together parliamentarians from Palestine and Israel and scientists.

Besides these efforts, we at the IPU are strongly convinced that it is only through the inclusion of all sectors of society that lasting peace can be achieved. The participation of women, young people and minorities is crucial for a peaceful co-existence and for taking all perspectives into account in decisions which, after all, affect us all.

This is why the IPU is a pioneer in the promotion of the participation of women and young people in politics. Like your Network of Women Parliamentarians, we have a dedicated structure – the Forum of Women Parliamentarians that was set up 25 years ago. And similarly to your Youth Parliament, we have created the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU. We are convinced that the best way to deal with the issue of terrorism is to raise the awareness of young people and to involve them in the decision-making process rather than through confrontation. We cannot ignore young people anymore as they are our future. I therefore propose to create synergies between these two networks of our respective organizations.

For their part, parliamentarians must set the example of tolerance in their words and their deeds. They must refrain from making speeches that incite hatred and xenophobia. They must also condemn all forms of discrimination based on race, colour, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or political affiliation.

To go back to the theme of your general debate, rest assured that the IPU is your ally regarding all forms of diversity. At the IPU we work under the banner of openness and tolerance as we are convinced that, by establishing a dialogue with people in their own language and their own cultural, religious and social contexts, we stand a better chance of gaining their confidence and cooperation. We stand a better chance of not having them develop frustrations that lead to repeated tensions and crises, violent extremism and violence in general.

I wish you a fruitful debate during this session and, once again, congratulate you on your 50th anniversary. Given our common vision, I look forward to strengthening the cooperation between our two organizations.

Thank you for your attention.