



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland
www.ipu.org

Address by the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Mr. Martin Chungong

Abidjan, 22 February 2016

Hon. Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire,
Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Your Excellence, Member of the 1540 Committee,
Madam Director of UNREC,
Distinguished experts and guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be with you here today on the occasion of this workshop co-organized by the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire and the IPU in collaboration with the UN Security Council's 1540 Committee and the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA).

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank you and through you your colleagues and staff at the National Assembly for the excellent arrangements put in place for us to welcome us in such good conditions. Your commitment to this seminar is in itself a guarantee of its success.

I would also like to thank our UN partners, whom I acknowledge here today, for the excellent collaboration that has been established with the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I undertake to strengthen this collaboration with a view to realizing our common goal.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The seminar that starts today, the first of its kind, deals with a topic of primary importance. Indeed, what issue could be more concrete than the one addressed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1540? This resolution calls on States to prevent non-State actors (including terrorist groups) from accessing nuclear, chemical or biological weapons. In my opinion, Resolution 1540 is even more important today than it was when it was adopted over a decade ago. One need only consider the

inroads groups, such as Daesh or Boko Haram, have made in several countries and in the minds of thousands of would-be “martyrs” worldwide.

The danger of terrorist groups making use of weapons of mass destruction to advance their criminal causes is very real. Resolution 1540 clearly relates to counter-terrorism. Its implementation strengthens international and national security and, as a consequence, promotes development as investments are primarily made in secure countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to draw your attention to the strong legislative component of Resolution 1540 that requires UN Member States to adopt and implement appropriate and effective laws. There is no point in stressing the pivotal role that you, as legislators, play in this regard. At the end of the day, it is the heavy responsibility of all parliamentarians to do their utmost to enhance the security of their citizens. Implementing Security Council resolutions such as 1540, a legal obligation, is one sure way to do that. However, the implementation of Resolution 1540 depends to a large extent on how aware parliaments are of the weapons of mass destruction that are present in their country and region, and of the risks associated with non-State actors obtaining such weapons.

Of course, every parliament is different and both capacities and awareness will vary from one parliament to another, not to mention the diversity of opinion between Members of Parliaments' on the matter. However, to succeed in the implementation of Resolution 1540, we need to make a concerted and sustained effort to ensure that everybody understands the urgency of the situation and that everyone has received all the information they need. This is the purpose of this seminar.

The “problem” with security issues is that while they make for an attractive topic to debate, they are much harder to address in actual practice unless they amount to a direct threat to your country. It really takes an effort in "global cooperation" for MPs in every country to realize that they have an obligation to act and to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This seminar is the first in a series of steps we have envisaged with our UN partners, in particular the UN Security Council's 1540 Committee and UNODA. We intend to follow up in this regional seminar with more targeted action at the national level in order to lend assistance to parliaments that wish to promote implementation of Resolution 1540 and translate it into concrete facts to achieve tangible results.

I am certain therefore that this seminar will present a solid basis for your action at the national level. It is my hope that it will facilitate knowledge transfer and engage MPs in cross-border informal networks. In a nutshell, it is my hope that the workshop will identify ways and means of strengthening security measures in your region.

The IPU stands ready to work with you in implementing recommendations coming out of this meeting for enhanced parliamentary action.

Thank you for your attention. I wish you a very successful meeting.

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