



OPENING REMARKS

BY

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Excellencies,

Mr. Secretary-General,

Honourable Saber Chowdhury, President of IPU,

Rt. Honourable Speakers,

Distinguished Members of Parliament,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you here today and to welcome our distinguished speakers. I would like to congratulate President Saber Chowdhury on his recent election and able leadership of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Particularly, I am heartened to see the wide range of participants who are here today; including parliamentarians, representatives of Member States, academics, members of civil society and the private sector. The diversity of participants lends itself nicely to the theme of today's hearing, *“Ensuring a people-centred approach to the new SDGs: A shared responsibility”*.

Over the next two days we will collectively examine how to best ensure that the needs of people around the world are adequately reflected in the post-2015 development agenda. We will also identify opportunities for direct involvement from actors spanning a broad array of stakeholders.

For the past two years, several processes have been underway toward the elaboration of the new development agenda. The comprehensive nature of these discussions has been unprecedented.

From civil society to the private sector, from academia to members of parliaments, voices from all segments of society have been heard. We must now heed their global call for transparency and accountability with strong support for political and institutional reforms.

Thanks to these efforts, a great deal of groundwork has already been laid for successful negotiations. The proposal of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals and the Report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing will serve as the basis for the discussions.

Recommendations on a technology facilitation mechanism, as well as the Secretary-General's Synthesis Report will also provide valuable inputs and help set the tone for the creation of a truly transformative development framework.

Esteemed Guests,

As the global community strives to formulate the post-2015 development agenda, the needs of all people, but in particular, the most vulnerable, must be at the forefront of discussions.

Country-ownership, good governance and a strengthened approach to economic development centred on human well-being will be key foundational building blocks for the future development framework.

Tackling poverty, empowering women, improving maternal and child health, creating viable infrastructure and promoting sustainable development will require transparent and accountable institutions that are fit for purpose.

As a pillar of democracy and good governance, parliaments can be instrumental in shaping a people-centred approach to the new agenda. In this regard, the participation of parliamentarians leading up to the UN Summit is of utmost importance.

Members of parliament have a unique perspective on the needs of citizens, the specific circumstances of their respective countries, as well as the capabilities of governments to meet development aspirations.

Parliamentarians also have the ability to find innovative solutions to reshape development cooperation and global partnership, while generating the necessary resources.

Beyond the creation of the post-2015 framework, parliamentarians must also be involved in the implementation of the future development agenda.

Parliaments will have a key role to play in fostering transparency, holding governments accountable, and ensuring that global commitments are effectively implemented. Members of parliament can also make invaluable contributions through the exchange of knowledge and best practices with peers.

Parliamentarians can serve as the bridge between governments and citizens; while also building trust through the establishment of legitimate institutions that support peace and security and rule of law.

The goals envisioned for the future development agenda are highly ambitious and must be matched with realistic expectations, coupled with the scaled-up mobilization of resources. Internationally-agreed commitments will have to be translated into national legislative frameworks and appropriate resources will need to be allocated.

To advance discussions on this important issue, I intend to convene a high-level thematic debate in February 2015 on the means of implementation for the post-2015 development agenda. I strongly

welcome the active participation of members of parliament and local government leaders at that debate.

Parliamentarians can help create and strengthen partnerships with the private sector, regional and local banks and other financial institutions in order to effectively distribute resources in a fair and equitable manner.

Members of parliament can also help by instituting effective and integrated systems of monitoring and accountability, including checks and balances at the local level, with regards to the mobilization and procurement of financial resources.

Distinguished Members of Parliament,

Over the course of the next two days, your deliberations will touch upon a number of important topics.

In the first session, you will discuss strategies on how to implement a rights-based approach to development. In its Declaration on the right to development, adopted in 1986, the General Assembly proclaimed that [I quote] The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized. [end quote].

Recognizing the intrinsic linkages between development and human rights, the challenge ahead will be to ensure that they are mutually reinforcing in the context of the new SDG's.

In the second session, you will discuss how to make markets work for people and explore how to develop regulatory frameworks to ensure economic stability, sustained levels of employment and economic growth, while preserving essential services.

The third session will focus on inequality and discrimination and will provide an opportunity to discuss the challenges associated with eliminating discriminatory laws, despite the overwhelming evidence of their negative impact on people's well-being.

In the final session you will examine the need for monitoring and accountability with regard to the SDGs and how people can be empowered in these processes.

Over the next two days, you will cover a great deal of ground on issues that are of paramount importance. I look forward to your spirited participation in these discussions and wish you all a productive exchange.

I thank you for your attention.