



REMARKS BY

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DURING THE

GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 143RD IPU ASSEMBLY

UNDER THE THEME

***“CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY: OVERCOMING
DIVISION AND BUILDING COMMUNITY”***

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**MADRID
KINGDOM OF SPAIN**

Check Against Delivery

Mr President, Secretary General of IPU, Fellow Parliamentarians,

The theme of this Assembly is topical and relevant to parliaments across the world. The strengthening of democracy remains our collective mandate as members of the IPU. We therefore wish to reaffirm our commitment towards IPU for building a more collaborative and united global community of parliaments, coming together to address the challenges we all face.

Mr President,

Democracy is a vital precondition for sustainable development in our world and for building inclusive societies.

Divisions based on wealth, access to education, healthcare and employment opportunities, are still common in many countries.

The marginalisation of some groups of people is also a constant reminder of the challenges we face in our attempts to create a more just global order.

We in Namibia are well aware of the dangers of polarization. Indeed, just over 30 years ago, our nation emerged from the shackles of apartheid, which was one of the highest forms of state-sanctioned polarization the world has seen.

In 1990, after many years fighting for freedom and independence, our people emerged victorious in our struggle. We have, in that

process, adopted a Constitution that established democratic electoral processes and institutions of state.

The challenges we face today in Namibia are derived from our painful past and from the more common global trends of the present. Although there is much greater equality than 30 years ago, there is still unequal access and opportunity, and the Government is committed to addressing these challenges head on.

However, we are also experiencing lower voter turnout, youth disaffection, disinformation on social media, and increasing levels of violence against women and children. These challenges are common to many countries, as revealed by a recent IPU report.

Mr President,

The constant flow of unverified information, particularly on social media, does harm to our societies, and undermines the credibility of governments and parliaments. It is therefore crucial that we intensify our efforts to be accessible to our citizens and deliver the services of parliament in more innovative ways.

We are cognisant that as a country we cannot afford to do away with conventional media as a method of engaging with our citizens. However, we need to evaluate our ability to effectively render services, as well as build on accountability and transparency, through regular monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

To inculcate trust in our political processes and institutions requires communication of these processes of review, and of the work of parliament. We are therefore developing our website to provide more current information, and also welcome citizens who wish to petition the National Assembly through the website.

Mr President,

The enhancement of participatory democracy is vital in current times where democracy itself is being challenged. The representation of women and young people is imperative in this regard, to protect our democracies.

I am pleased to report that women currently constitute 44 per cent of MPs in our National Assembly. This did not come about by happenstance but was achieved through a political decision taken by the governing party, SWAPO. Other parties have not taken the same line but have increased the participation of women in their parliamentary representation.

Currently, only 8 per cent of our MPs are under 30 years old, but we are increasing the number of young MPs and Deputy Ministers. In our delegation here at this 143rd IPU Assembly, we are proud to have Africa's youngest sitting MP, Honourable Patience Masua, who is 22 years old.

Mr President,

I cannot conclude without saying something about the Covid-19 pandemic. It is important that we continue to speak out against vaccine nationalism in light of the global drive to vaccinate more people and achieve the required immunity against Covid-19.

People in the North are already having booster shots, while countries in the South are often struggling to get sufficient vaccines for their people to receive two shots, as required.

Therefore, the distribution of vaccines must be done in an equitable manner, that will not leave behind those countries in the global South.

I thank you.