



**ADDRESS BY SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, HON MRS. NOSIVIWE MAPISA-NQAKULA, MP, IN THE OCCASION OF THE 143<sup>RD</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY THEME: CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY: OVERCOMING DIVISION AND BUILDING COMMUNITY, 27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021.**

Honourable President of the IPU, Mr. Duarte Pacheco  
Honourable Presiding Officers,  
Honourable Members; and  
Distinguished guests,

Honourable President, it is an honour and privilege for me and the people of the Republic of South Africa to be afforded this prestigious opportunity to contribute in the debate of such important Theme of the 143 IPU Assembly, ***"The Contemporary challenges to democracy: Overcoming division and building community"***.

On behalf of the delegation from South Africa, I wish to express our great appreciation for the kind and warm welcome we have received in this beautiful country since our arrival. We thank the Government and the people of Spain for their hospitality and kindness as hosts of this Assembly.

We are meeting during the most difficult period in our lifetime where the world is faced with the unprecedented common deadly challenge of COVID19. Indeed we live in the world of interconnection.

This virus knows no boundary nor the social and economic standing of individuals in the society as it attacks both developed and developing countries, rich and poor people alike.

If we could learn anything good from the current ordeal is that we are one and we need to unite in conquering contemporary challenges to democracy such as pandemics, scourge of diseases, hunger, wars, discrimination, women abuse and terrorism. COVID 19 did not only result in the loss of millions of lives across the globe, but it has caused immense damage to the economic and social stability in the nations of the world in general and developing countries in particular.

In this regard, we commend the sterling efforts and initiative taken by South Africa and India at both the World Trade Organization and United Nations level, for proposing initiatives aimed at temporarily wavering of specific Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights relating to the manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines, medicines, diagnostics and other technologies. This initiative co-sponsored by more than 60 countries cautioned against the idea of “vaccine-nationalism”.

Part of the reasons stated, was that wavering parts of the agreement on trade-related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights would allow drug makers in poor countries to produce effective vaccines without worrying about these rules being used for self-centred gains.

Your Excellency, Mr. President, the hindering of the production and access to COVID 19 vaccines, is a typical example that exposes the inherent fault lines resulting in skewed experiences of democracy within the world governance system.

To what extent has democracy been able to be a people centered system, and therefore, a catalyst for human development, beyond its structural measure of indicators and checks and balances.

A key characteristic of democracy is that it is measured, and it must tick boxes of various indicators, including but not limited to the holding of frequent elections to elect government, good governance, free press, an independent judiciary, an institutionalized system of accountability and the civil rights and freedoms of citizens.

Over the past century many countries in the world have adopted a system of democratic governance with many of these indicators for measure, signaling a global acceptance of democracy as the best form of government available to us, given the many challenges the world has emerged over the period.

In fact, since then, democracy has served to level the political playing fields and created a system of order where there was none in certain instances. It has empowered humanity to have a say and to participate in affairs of their countries. It has brought about the recognition of rights of women, the protection of vulnerable sectors, promoted accountability and central planning in the usage of economic resources, and to some extent, facilitated some giant leaps towards the illusive world peace.

Democracies are also anchored on the need to build strong institutions that are needed to ensure accountability and protects the rights and freedoms of people. In the context of the globalized economy and governance system, which remains unequal, how do these democratic

institutions play a role in supporting a strong agenda for the socio-economic development of the billions of poor people who live in democracies all over the world?

If it is to survive, it is important that it is responsive to the socio-economic plight of all people and not just be about the structural indicators. Democracy as a system must protect its own legitimacy and demonstrate the moral authority required by governments to govern. Failure to do this will create other challenges, as it will cause a serious backlash against democracy, albeit populist led, giving rise to opportunism and polarization of communities.

Mr. President, Your Excellencies,

The attainment of democracy in our country, South Africa against the barbaric apartheid system is a living proof that no challenge can withstand the will and mighty of the united global community. As the product of international solidarity, we call upon the nations of the world, IPU Member States in particular, to support the call and the birth right of the people of Palestine and Western Sahara for sovereignty and self-determination.

As the Government and Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, we fully support the two-state solution as the lasting solution to Israel/Palestine and Morocco/Western Sahara situation. Both States have an inherent right to coexist as sovereign states. It is our considered view that, the IPU as a global Parliament should not shy away in making its voice heard.

In fact, the IPU, as the Global Parliament should spearhead efforts aimed at finding lasting solutions to these global challenges affecting humanity.

In the same wavelength, we fully support sentiments echoed yesterday during the opening Session of this Assembly regarding the continuous economic embargos by the United States against Cuba and Venezuela. In this regard, we call upon the global community in general, and the IPU Members States in particular, to desist from using economic sanctions as a punishment for ideological and political differences.

The current economic sanctions against the State of Venezuela and Cuba have failed to achieve its intended objectives, instead, it has only contributed in the worsening of the economic situation and levels of poverty to the innocent citizens of the two countries. The continuous and persistent economic sanctions is a direct assault to the sovereignty and democratic right of those states, it is an infringement of the right to life, the right to development and wellbeing of ordinary citizens of those countries.

Your Excellency Mr. President, it has been proven on numerous occasions that in every war, instability, insecurity, famine, outbreak of killer diseases and pandemics, women are the most affected. Statistics are showing that incidences of women abuse and violence against women have increased since the outbreak of COVID 19.

This calls upon all of us as the IPU Member States to strengthen our resolve for gender equality and to put in place measures through

policies and the promulgation of laws that seek to promote gender equality and the protection of women against gender-based violence and abuse.

The IPU as the global parliament remains an important vehicle and an enabler to solve the Contemporary Challenges to Democracy and a linchpin to overcome divisions and to build communities. In this regard, Parliaments and Parliamentarians, as the representative of the people, have an obligation to remain vigilant and to play their oversight role and to ensure public participation in monitoring the Reconstruction Recovery Plans of the economies affected by the scourge of COVID 19.

Those Recovery Plans must better the lives of women, youth and girl children. We call upon international solidarity in order to turn around the current situation for the benefit of humanity.

In conclusion Your Excellency, Mr. President, we call upon the developed world to support the economic recovery plans of the developing nations affected by the current pandemic and the ongoing effect of the climate change. We call upon the developed nations to ensure the full implementation of the outcomes of recently concluded COP26.

I THANK YOU