



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

145th IPU Assembly

Kigali, Rwanda
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2022 | Kigali, Rwanda

Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

11 October 2022

Your Excellency, Mr. President of the Republic of Rwanda,
The Right Honourable President of the Senate of Rwanda,
The Right Honourable Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of Rwanda,
Excellency President of the IPU,
Honourable Speakers and Members of Parliament gathered here,
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to convey my heartfelt gratitude to the Parliament and Government of Rwanda for hosting this Assembly under such auspicious conditions.

It is a matter of a great personal pleasure for me to be back here at the heart of the dynamic, innovative and vibrant continent of Africa. As you may know, my background is in another part of Africa, but Rwanda holds a particular place in my heart. Indeed, throughout my career at the IPU we have worked closely with your Parliament to build one of the most forward-looking and gender-sensitive institutions among our 178 Member Parliaments. We have every reason to be proud of our achievements.

In the 1990s, the IPU stood proudly next to the men and women of this country of a thousand hills to support them in their noble task of rebuilding after the genocide. We are proud – I am proud – to have been involved in shaping the modern-day Rwanda as you embarked on the drafting of a gender-sensitive Constitution that has taken the country to the top of the table, in numerous measures of gender-equal political participation and women's and girls' empowerment.

So it's no coincidence that gender equality is the main theme of this Assembly. Rwanda provides proof that gender equality and gender-sensitive institutions are drivers of peace and resilience.

But make no mistake: no country can claim to have achieved full gender equality today and no parliament can claim to be 100% gender-sensitive. At this Assembly we must look at ways to accelerate progress to achieve our shared goal of gender equality and to ensure that all women and girls fully enjoy rights and freedoms on an equal footing with men and boys, allowing them to lead dignified lives free from all forms of discrimination, mistreatment and violence, in control of their own bodies and following their own minds.

As we gather here today, my native continent of Africa – regrettably so – is experiencing an epidemic of instability and coups. A sad example of this is what has just happened in Burkina Faso, which has suffered its second military coup in a year. As a community of democrats, the IPU cannot condone any assumption of power by military force. Further afield, the Sahel region is facing threats to its peace and security, becoming a hotspot for terrorism and organized crime, alongside numerous other challenges. The IPU's Call of the Sahel initiative, which is aiming to attract new ideas and new supporters during this Assembly, is meant to be our response to this dire challenge. I am sure we will all be keen to lend our support to this endeavour. Needless to say, the tensions and conflicts simmering on the continent are undermining democratic institutions.

#IPU145

I use this opportunity to draw attention to our mantra: democracy for everyone. Unstable and compromised democracies are holding back the socio-political and economic development of our societies. A coup d'état is never the appropriate response to instability or terrorism. The right of the people to freely express themselves through elections must be safeguarded above all else.

Certainly, the parliamentary community gathered here this week must continue to apply itself to addressing the devastating consequences on the global community of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Yet, I propose that we cannot afford to overlook or move the spotlight away from the many emerging crises in the part of the world where we are gathered today: Africa. I therefore launch a clarion call for all of us to put our best foot forward and strive to identify dynamic and innovative solutions to bring back lasting peace, discourage military responses to instability, and support sustainable development throughout Africa.

Parliamentarians must express solidarity with their colleagues in Africa working to preserve security and democracy, show their support for multilateral mechanisms striving for peace and harmony, give their backing to parliaments that have chosen the path of democracy and the rule of law, and ensure that parliaments across the continent always keep the best interests of their populations at heart. Peace is the only solution and the time for peace is now. I hereby announce that I intend to propose that the IPU's Governing Bodies consider forging a new partnership with the indigenous institutions on the African continent – the African Union and Pan-African Parliament, as well as the regional integration bodies such as ECOWAS, CEMAC, SADC among others – to identify pathways for addressing Africa's chronic instability, which is seriously hampering democracy and by extension the wellbeing of the continent.

Excellency,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

In conclusion, I want to use this lectern to underscore the value of dialogue as articulated by the founders of our beloved Organization. During this week in Kigali, I am sure we will all be anxious to prove our founding fathers right. We must give dialogue a chance. We must live up to their vision of deploying the potential of parliaments and parliamentary diplomacy as a contribution to conflict resolution. My dream is for this Assembly in Kigali to be remembered as the place where the global parliamentary community resolved and committed unequivocally to complement traditional diplomacy in all global efforts to bring peace to our troubled world.

I thank you for your attention.