



Distinguished parliamentarians,

After the opening remarks of my Executive Director Sima Bahous at the opening of this Assembly, I am here today representing UN Women. I would like to share a huge thank you to the Parliamentarians of Rwanda as our hosts for their warm welcome. We have learned so much from you, and your experience is truly inspiring.

Allow me to also thank IPU for our partnership over many years and for dedicating the topic of this year's General Debate to the issue of gender equality.

Over the last decade, together with our partners, UN Women has cooperated with over 80 parliaments -- so on behalf of my UN Women colleagues in country offices around the world I would like to share a big greeting with all of you parliamentarians today in the room.

Honourable Members, as we've heard over the past four days, you have an important role in creating more gender-equal societies. As both the lawmakers and overseers of legislation, you are the key drivers of change.

Several delegations have shared how they have obtained 50/50 representation in parliament. Congratulations to you. For those who still have to take steps to reach this goal, I would like to suggest adopting temporary special measures, including ambitious gender quotas to achieve the goal of 50/50 gender balance at all levels of elected positions as agreed by Member States during the 65<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission of the Status of Women.

Experience from other countries show us quotas work.

As several speakers have said over the past days, it is not only about having more women in parliament, but also ensuring that they have impact. Specifically, Adopting and reforming the necessary legislation to end discrimination is necessary.

Discriminatory laws hold back women and girls from reaching their full potential. It is also holding all the countries from achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, by 2030.

Ladies and gentlemen, repealing discriminatory laws and following up on their implementation is a matter of urgency.

No one is better positioned to do this than you.

It is also essential for you to ensure gender responsive budget making and policy making.

Honourable Members, be bold and take the lead in transforming parliaments into more inclusive institutions and set an example for others.

Prevention and response efforts to address all forms of violence against women in politics are critical

Violence and harassment against women in public life has increased as more women have gained access to power.

Despite disturbing levels of violence against women MPs, most parliaments still lack sexual harassment policies for parliamentarians and staff.

As a matter of urgency, parliaments must adopt and effectively enforce institutional codes of conduct, establish monitoring and reporting mechanisms, or revise existing ones

Your action for making gender equality a reality is critical.

Finally UN Women stands with women and girls who are victims of conflict including in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen and elsewhere. In Ukraine,

Russia's war that violates the UN Charter, has had devastating consequences on the lives and livelihoods of women and girls. These effects are being felt across the globe. On behalf of UN Women I would like to salute the women and girls of Ukraine who have been playing such a courageous role in responding to the conflict, in political, military and humanitarian spheres.

UN Women stands with the women of Iran in their rightful demands to protest injustice without reprisal, and to be free to exercise their bodily autonomy, , and the upholding of their basic human rights.

UN Women stands ready to continue our cooperation. Thank you.

*Presented on 14 October 2022*

*By Sabine Freizer, Chief, Governance and Participation, UN Women*