

DRAFT



UN SRSG to the AU and UNOAU Head of Office  
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Keynote – Evening Address  
Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

147th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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Your Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola and AU Champion for Peace and Reconciliation,  
Your Excellency, Ms. Carolina Cerqueira, Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Angola and President of the 147<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, whom I warmly congratulate for being the first elected female Speaker of Angola's National Assembly.  
Your Excellency, Mr. Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,  
Honourable Speakers,  
Distinguished Representatives,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, I would like to sincerely thank you for your kind invitation to participate in the 147th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, here in this beautiful and historical city of Luanda.

The Secretary-General sends you his warmest greetings and congratulations on this momentous occasion. Due to the many pressing issues on his agenda, he was unable to join you in person. At his behest, it is with the greatest honour that I stand for him tonight.

Allow me to express the appreciation of the United Nations system for the support of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, not only in the domestication of international law and international treaties through UN member state parliaments, but also in your Union's relentless work to promote the rule of law globally and strengthen multilateralism.

Moreover, your IPU's steadfast support for the implementation of the United Nations' sustainable development goals, the SDGs, as encapsulated in Agenda 2030, is testimony to your commitment to bring about a fairer, more peaceful and prosperous world for all.

Secretary-General Guterres recognises the key role that the Inter-Parliamentary Union has played in the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which was convened last September in New York by the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Social and Economic Council, in line with the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions for “The Future We Want”.

By making SDG16 on the quest for Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions the focus of this 147<sup>th</sup> Assembly, IPU is yet again significantly contributing to our collective efforts in furtherance of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice, and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. At the outset, it is important to stress that peace, justice and strong institutions are intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

We are meeting at a time of great distress for our global community. Wars both new and old are yet again raging, causing destruction, loss of human life and despair. Many are wondering whether the UN Charter’s promise to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” is still relevant today and worth pursuing.

The cascading challenges we face, from global warming and the ensuing climate change emergency to international terrorism and violence extremism, and from global pandemics to the rising tide of violent conflicts and widening inequalities, are all inflicting harrowing suffering upon the most vulnerable people in our societies. It’s therefore fitting that IPU’s Assembly, which brings together people’s representatives across the world, has dedicated its present gathering to reflect on the interplay between peace, justice and strong institutions.

As the Secretary-General explained during the formal launch of his policy brief “A New Agenda for Peace” on 20<sup>th</sup> July, quote: “we are on the verge of a new era [...] marked by the highest level of geopolitical tensions and major power competition in decades.”, end of quote.

Trust, a key ingredient in developing friendly relations between nations and within society, is at its lowest level. This is exacerbated by the fact that the very normative frameworks that helped sustain world peace for many decades are contested, more than ever before.

It is against this backdrop that the Secretary-General is calling for a surge in diplomacy for peace to make rebuilding global consensus around these norms an urgent essential task of diplomatic efforts going forward.

To succeed, national ownership and leadership will be paramount. By investing in prevention and promoting national dialogue and reconciliation processes to ensure no past or new grievances are left unattended and fester, hence becoming a breeding ground for future conflicts.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

IPU couldn't have found a more suitable venue to embark on such a journey but here in Angola, a land of immense potential endowed with unparalleled wisdom drawn from its rich cosmogony, such as **Nzambi Mpungu**, who teaches us that "the stars that adorn the night sky were created through the collaborative work of the owl, the agile spider, the hardworking ant, and the patient tortoise", a story that epitomizes the diverse skills and teamwork that are required to accomplish any great and lasting human endeavour". There can't be any better example of nation building.

Rising from the ashes of a fratricidal decades-long conflict, Angola has a lot to share on the immense possibilities that national reconciliation, reconstruction and democratization can offer to nation building.

At this juncture, I would like to once more recognize your Excellency, President Lourenço, for your personal commitment to promoting the noble cause of peace. It is no surprise your peers, at the African Union, have appointed you as their Peace and Reconciliation Champion. We are most grateful for your unwavering dedication to peacebuilding in Africa.

Your tireless efforts to promote peaceful relations are consistent with the Secretary-General's call for advancing a holistic approach to conflict prevention. He is emphasizing the primacy of politics and the critical role of national ownership, including through the establishment of inclusive institutions that hold both governments and the governed mutually accountable. In so doing, countries invest in conflict prevention, for peace can never be taken for granted. Instead, it must be an everyday endeavour involving all components of society. Not governments only but also elected officials in parliaments, civil society organizations, particularly women and youth organizations, as well as religious and community leaders.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

This is paramount for there can't be any sustainable development and fight against poverty if peace remains elusive and conflict pervasive.

National states have the primary responsibility to promote dialogue and inclusive political systems in which all parts of our diverse societies can contribute to building stronger and more harmonious nations.

Of course, there is no one size fits all recipe. But there is no more effective way than embracing these challenges together, making it a whole of a society enterprise, in a transparent manner, to ensure the entire national community benefits from the talents of all its people, under the leadership of duly elected national officials committed to addressing the needs and meeting the aspirations of their constituencies, leaving no one behind.

This brings me to say a few words on Justice, the second theme of your Assembly.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

I have no doubts that you all agree with me that peace alone without solid foundations for justice may be elusive. Everywhere, togetherness is losing ground to selfishness. Injustices and inequalities are on the rise at all levels of society and globally. This is happening at a time of deeply contrasted realities.

Our world has never before achieved so much progress in all fields of human activities, in science, medicine, technology, manufacturing and trade, global finance as well as the ongoing and fascinating advances in Artificial Intelligence that is propelling the ongoing 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. We live in a world of unparalleled mastery in knowledge, freedoms and possibilities.

Yet, we are witnessing with great concerns the widening gaps between have and have not, which the COVID-19 pandemic exposed bare. Moreover, a frightening level of polarization largely fuelled by social media and the spread of toxic alternative facts and misinformation is spreading like bushfire carrying populist narratives that threaten to defeat the much-needed unity of purpose to tackle the global challenges facing us all.

Equally unsettling is the serious gaps in governance that are giving way to the proliferation of unconstitutional changes of government which, if not carefully managed, may lead to further abuses and denial of justice.

That is why UN Secretary-General António Guterres is encouraging countries to revisit their freely agreed social contracts in pursuance of fairer and more peaceful societies. But the need for justice is also true at the global level. Multilateralism itself is at stake.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

Today, “90% of the Sustainable Development targets remain off-track in Africa . . . with Africa’s share of global trade having been reduced since 1970 from 5% to 2.8%”, while most of conflict in Africa derives from competition over resources [or the absence of fair and transparent

governance in their exploitation]. This is compounded by the growing absence of the state and, more generally, by weak or ineffective institutions.

Addressing these daunting challenges cannot be Africa's responsibility alone. Secretary-General Guterres is spearheading efforts for a just multilateral environment where countries from the Global South will have their fair share of global trade with a more equitable global financial system that doesn't make the cost of borrowing 500% more expensive for countries whose fiscal space is already structurally constrained and are threatened to fall into a more crippling debt distress.

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

This poly crisis signals have brought our global community near the breaking point, but they also present an immense opportunity – indeed an opportunity to face and shape our legacy, namely the future that we here today bequeath to younger generations that we can already hear clamouring behind us.

We must restore trust in our global institutions and in our member state governments to show extraordinary leadership and deliver a just, global economic system of equal access and opportunity, including a just global transition for climate change mitigation and adaptation to avoid further destabilizing global peace and security.

However,

### **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

To flourish, peace and justice require strong institutions. This is my third and last point.

Strong institutions are the bedrock of stable and prosperous societies grounded in the rule of law and the protection of individual rights, particularly those of most vulnerable groups.

The strength of any institution stems from its legitimacy which, in turn, is both a measure of and results from people's adherence to a system of norms that guarantee fairness and equal protection, while maintaining national cohesion and public order.

Such institutions must be transparent, predictable and promote the mutual accountability called for by Secretary-General Guterres.

This is a prerequisite for a rights-based environment that creates a leveled-playing field in which the exercise of political freedoms, including, as appropriate, the conduct of electoral processes that are fair and peaceful, allowing for the free expression of people's will and the integrity of their choice.

## **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

Equally critical is the need to promote strong and more representative multilateral institutions. This is the essence of a just and effective multilateral system UN Secretary-General Guterres is eagerly promoting.

He shares the main thrust of SDG17 which aims to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. Against this backdrop, the Secretary General has warmly welcomed the inclusion of Africa into the G20, recognizing this as a step towards a fairer multilateral environment. The same is required for other major institutions responsible for global governance, such as the UN Security Council.

To move from ideas to action, the Secretary-General is looking forward to advancing these common objectives at next year's Summit of the Future with a view to collectively reaffirm the values enshrined in the UN Charter, reinvigorate multilateralism, boost implementation of existing commitments, agree on solutions to new challenges, and to restore trust.

## **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

We are made of a stronger metal. The Inter-Parlamentary Union, and your mandate to promote 'democracy for all', can play a central role in stemming the tides that are shaking our world to its core, reversing these shortfalls and promoting democratic and development gains.

In fact, we must lose no time and spare no effort to prove to the coming generations that, when all seemed lost, we stood together, shoulder to shoulder, to reverse negative trends and advance positive developments.

## **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

I for one remain, in the words of the late Reverend Desmond Tutu, a prisoner of hope. We must all refuse to be condemned to despair.

So today, I mean tonight,

## **Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

We face what some call a 'turn in the tide' and what others call a 'headwind' in our struggle against exclusion and in favour of inclusion, international solidarity, global peace and security, democracy, human rights, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the empowerment of women and the inclusion of our youth.

In short and in conclusion,

**Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

Your work in promoting accountability and transparency, in advancing the checks and balances of participatory political systems and constitutions, including through the separation of powers and the strengthening of democratic, judicial and parliamentary institutions, is exactly the work that will help us endure the storms of our current challenges and of our new, emerging world order.

We will endure such challenges by confirming and continuing our commitment to the delivery of fair and equitable services by the State and coverage in the provision of public goods and services – a commitment and delivery that, combined, can secure the social contracts and sustainable development that the world's peoples and the people of Africa want.

The solution to conflict always has been and always will be clarity, consistency, and coherence in the conduct of our debates, the resolution of our disagreements and in the application of our shared values and principles in the name of our common humanity. There is power in the equal application of international humanitarian and human rights law and in an equal accountability for the abrogation of our responsibilities under international humanitarian and human rights law.

**Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives,**

I salute your honourable commitments. I commend your work in the promotion of Peace, Justice and Strong and inclusive institutions for sustainable development, and I congratulate you on behalf of the United Nations Secretary-general for the work of your Union.

Thank you.