



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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# 147th IPU Assembly

Luanda, Angola  
23–27 October 2023



## Speaking notes

### Ms. Cynthia Lopez Castro, President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

Opening of the General Debate  
“Parliamentary action for peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16)”

Tuesday 24 October 2023, 11 a.m.

Madam Speaker of the National Assembly and President of the 147<sup>th</sup> Assembly,  
Mr. President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,  
Mr. Secretary General,  
Ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear colleagues,  
Friends,

It is my great pleasure to address the Assembly’s General Debate for the first time in my role as President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

Colleagues, as we consider parliamentary action for peace, justice, and strong institutions, let us put our gender lenses on and place women and girls at the center of our reflections and deliberations.

Why? Simply because there can be no good decision and no efficient action without taking into consideration the needs, interests, views, and experiences of half of the population.

This is obvious and yet far from being a reality. 23 years ago, the Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security recognized gender-inclusivity as being vital in sustaining peace. Evidence shows that women’s equal and meaningful participation in peace processes increases chances of lasting peace agreements, reinforces security and cements stability.

Yet, until 2019 women made up only 13% of negotiators and 6% of signatories in all major peace processes around the world. Unfortunately, more recent peace processes are also far from achieving women’s inclusive participation.

At a time of widespread violent conflicts, if we don’t want peace processes to fail, we should make full use of our parliamentary action to demand and ensure women’s participation and leadership in all such processes.

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Colleagues, the fight for access to justice for women and girls should also be high on the agenda of our parliamentary action.

Our countries and parliaments made many commitments to empower women and girls. Some progress has been made in reviewing discriminatory legislation and including gender equality in laws and constitutions. But these rights are mere words if they are not enforced. And there is still a long way to go.

We must continue reforming our legal frameworks to eliminate discrimination, violence and harmful practices against women and girls, and to advance equality in inheritance and property rights, in family law and other areas where gaps persist. Let us also promote courageous gender-responsive justice reforms and work with traditional and religious leaders and other stakeholders to ensure access to justice for women and girls everywhere, leaving no one behind!

When it comes to our action for stronger institutions, our motto sums up in three words: gender-sensitive parliaments!

I am proud that this concept has become a norm thanks to the IPU a decade ago, and I am also proud that the Kigali Declaration adopted last year recommitted us to make our parliaments gender-sensitive for a more resilient and peaceful world. We said we would lead by example by achieving parity in decision-making and embedding a culture of equality in all our endeavours.

Let us now move from words to action!

Thank you!