

Mr President, my distinguished colleagues,

First of let me congratulate Angola with successfully hosting the 147<sup>th</sup> session of the IPU.

Today, I stand before you to speak of a goal that is the very backbone of the Sustainable Development Goals framework. It is SDG 16, "Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions." This goal is not just a piece of the puzzle; it is the cornerstone upon which our shared vision of a better world rests. Let me tell you why it's so crucial, and how it's intertwined with our most fundamental needs.

**Nelson Mandela**, a scholar, and a freedom fighter once reminded us that, "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." SDG 16 embodies this wisdom, for it encapsulates the principles of peace, justice, and strong institutions. But it's not just about achieving these noble ideals; it's about the trust—the unwavering faith of people in their governments and the capacity of these governments to meet their needs equitably and sustainably.

Trust is the lifeline of democracy, the guardian of peace and security, the catalyst of economic development, and the bedrock of stability. Think about it: the very act of casting a vote, a voice in the governance of one's country, represents the profound trust that people place in their leaders. This trust is the currency that fuels our democratic engines, enabling us to move forward.

In the heart of Africa, there's a beautiful proverb: "For one to mend the world, he must start in his own village." The village, in this context, symbolizes civic space, the arena where citizens engage in shaping their government and society. It is essential for achieving SDG 16 because it is where the collective wisdom and aspirations of the people are channeled. It's where their trust is nurtured and realized.

But to make this trust flourish, the bond between people, parliamentarians, and governments must be fortified. We can strengthen this bond by fostering open dialogue, by embracing inclusivity, and by ensuring transparency.

Moreover, the effectiveness of parliaments is a critical component of SDG 16. By investing in capacity-building

programs for lawmakers and embracing broad-based representation, nations can guarantee that their leaders are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions.

Consistently upholding the rule of law and protecting fundamental rights are integral components. A robust and independent judiciary system that ensures the rule of law and safeguards the rights of its citizens is crucial. It is through such measures that nations build a solid foundation of justice and strong institutions.

Furthermore, the prevention of violence is essential to maintaining social peace and good governance. Equal gender representation is vital. Women play transformative power in peace-building. By empowering women to take a more active role, societies can take significant strides toward peace, security, and justice.

In conclusion, SDG 16 is not just a goal on a list; it's the guiding principle that underpins our entire journey towards a better world. It reminds us that true development is rooted in peace, justice, and strong institutions. It calls upon us to earn the trust

of our citizens, to ensure transparent and equitable governance, and to cultivate the civic space where their voices are heard.

Let us remember the immense responsibility we bear and the tremendous potential we hold. Let us be inspired by our people and guided by the principles of good governance. Together, we can build a world that is just, peaceful, and strong, where the trust of the people is the driving force behind democracy, peace, economic prosperity, stability, and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.