



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Office of the Deputy Speaker

Mar 26, 2024

**Deputy Speaker's Address: 148th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
General Debate on the theme: Parliamentary Diplomacy; Building
Bridges for Peace and Understanding**

[Protocol]

Distinguished colleagues and friends,

1. Today, we focus on Parliamentary Diplomacy; Building Bridges for Peace and Understanding. Sunday's deliberation on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza showed us what parliamentary diplomacy should not be. We failed to reach a consensus, missing a crucial opportunity for collective action. True diplomacy requires compromise and understanding, even on contentious issues. My dear friends and colleagues, war is ugly; my advice according to Sun Tzu is that "whoever wishes to fight must count the cost - it is very expensive in human and material costs.
2. We must reconsider our approach to addressing emergency items. Rule 11.2 allows for flexibility, suggesting the possibility of addressing multiple urgent issues. Neglecting regions like Africa, where significant challenges persist, is unacceptable. Let us interpret the rule's purpose – addressing pressing issues – to allow for consideration of multiple emergency items. By reforming our processes, we can ensure parliamentary diplomacy truly reflects the

world's diverse needs.

3. Gender equality and inclusion in governance and peacebuilding is essential. Women's underrepresentation in parliament impedes progress. Statistically, the representation of women in parliament in the world, hovering around 26%, is a stark reminder that we have yet to fully utilize the talent and perspective of half of the world's population. By empowering women in leadership roles, we unlock the full potential of democratic governance. A strong bridge for peace is built on the foundation of equal voices.

4. In addition, building bridges for peace requires a holistic perspective. A bridge that prioritizes certain crises while overlooking others is not a bridge toward genuine understanding. It is a cause for concern that the plight of Africa, where thousands of lives are lost to ongoing conflicts, has yet to be addressed as an emergency item. From the horrific situation in Sudan, with over 13,000 lives lost, to the ongoing tragedy in the D.R. Congo, to the militancy and terror in Sahel Africa, the human cost of these conflicts cannot be ignored because the ripple effects of these crises in Africa ultimately impact the world.
In the light of ongoing crises across the world, the critical question is: could these situations have been prevented or better managed?
It is in this regard that IPU must as a matter of utmost imperative create a task force for Sudan. The unchecked crises in Sudan, Somalia, and D.R. Congo, all in Africa, create a ripple effect of instability across the continent, breeding conditions for extremism, mass displacement, and a drain on resources that could be used for development.

5. Parliamentary diplomacy offers a strategic approach to global peace. We must focus on conflict prevention, management, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Furthermore, as a parliament, our commitment to legislative diplomacy working in concert with the Executive led by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has gradually seen the return of normalcy in ECOWAS where the closed borders have been opened to ensure the free movement of goods and citizens. In the same vein, this tool has also been deployed in the face of misunderstandings between citizens of different countries leading to xenophobic attacks.

6. As a legislature, we adopt particular programmes that address peculiar challenges to peace. In this way, we have adopted the “Peace in Southeast Project”, employing a non-kinetic approach that focuses on reconciliation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and reintegration which goes to address the multi-decades-old devastating effects of war in South East Nigeria. For us, this is legislative diplomacy in action, fostering peace and development within our borders - representing a model for post-conflict peacebuilding. In addition, PISE-P birthed the passage of the South East Development Commission Bill, soon to be sent to the peace-loving President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for assent.

7. In conclusion, we must regularly review our parliamentary diplomacy efforts. Implementing strong Post-Legislative Appraisal mechanisms ensures our actions deliver intended outcomes. Let us actively assess the efficiency of our legislative efforts in promoting peace, security, and human understanding. We can continuously improve our ability to build bridges for peace and understanding by evaluating our work.

I wish the world the peace that passes all understanding and may the bridge building commence today.

Thank you!