



**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA**

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**STATEMENT BY**

**THE RT HON MS NELLY B K MUTTI, SC, MP, FAPRA, SPEAKER OF THE  
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF ZAMBIA**

**DURING THE GENERAL DEBATE ON THE TOPIC:**

**PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY: BUILDING BRIDGES FOR PEACE AND  
UNDERSTANDING**

**PREPARED FOR**

**THE 148<sup>TH</sup> ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (1PU) AND  
RELATED MEETINGS, 23<sup>RD</sup> TO 27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 2024, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT  
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**Madam President,**

Allow me to make special recognition of all the female parliamentarians present in this auditorium and wish them a happy women's month as we march towards more effective women representation in the various legislatures globally. Let me once again congratulate you, Madam President, on your historic election as President of the IPU.

I say "***As – Salam Alaykum***" (Peace be upon you) to all our Muslim brothers and Sisters here present as they observe the Holy Ramadan.

**Madam President,**

Some 135 years ago in 1889, two parliamentarians, William Randal Cremer of the United Kingdom and Frederic Passy of France birthed the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) as a platform on which the promotion of peace and international arbitration is interrogated by all political systems across parliaments. This initiative by these two distinguished parliamentarians was arguably the first step towards parliamentary diplomacy and its attendant role as a centre for dialogue and peace as well as advancing International Co-operation. It is, therefore, gratifying to note that on this day and at this time, we are gathered to discuss the topic "***Parliamentary Diplomacy: Building Bridges for Peace and Understanding.***" For our general debate.

In view of this, **Madam President**, allow me to share my reflections on this timely topic. To put context to my statement, I wish to commence by alluding to the words of the Secretary General of the United Nations and a distinguished parliamentarian for over 17 years, Mr **Antonio GUTERRES** when he said and I

quote ***"it is widely recognized that there is no peace without development and no development without peace"*** end of quote.

**Madam President,**

it is important to underscore that peace is the precursor for development and Parliamentary diplomacy is the catalyst for this. In addition, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, has recognised peace and security to be prerequisites for achieving sustainable development, which in turn provides a pathway for peaceful societies. Despite this recognition, conflicts and insecurity continue to escalate in regional hotspots across the globe. The happenings in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, to mention but a few, are too ghastly to comprehend especially within the context of human rights and dignity. This situation was validated by the Global Peace Index of 2023, which indicates that the level of global peacefulness has deteriorated for the ninth consecutive year since 2008. This is a very serious trend which needs immediate interventions.

**Madam President,**

With the continued conflicts we are witnessing, it will be difficult and nearly impossible, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is, therefore, need for collective action to foster peace, understanding and harmony for sustainable development and Parliaments, as national forums designed to address contentious issues, relationships and political disagreements, provide this unique platform for promoting conflict resolution through the democratic means of dialogue and compromise.

**Madam President,**

Parliamentary Diplomacy brings a distinctive form of diplomacy due to the fact that, Members of Parliament have the marginal flexibility that may not be accorded to a conventional diplomat. It is therefore, imperative that we mobilise Parliaments to use their legislative, oversight, budget approval and representative functions to ensure that all people, including the marginalised live safely, peacefully and have access to equal opportunities. Further, Parliaments can leverage on the various Inter-Parliamentary Groups, Parliamentary Committees, and Parliamentary Support Groups, as parliamentary diplomatic actors.

**Madam President,**

Let me briefly share Zambia's experience with regard to parliamentary diplomacy. The Government of the Republic of Zambia has demonstrated commitment to safeguarding peace and maintaining security in the country by which is anchored on implementing a policy and legal framework that promotes peace.

**Madam President,**

From a parliamentary perspective, the Constitution of Zambia (~~Amendment~~) Act No. ~~2 of 2016~~, mandates the Zambian Parliament to ratify international agreements and conventions. This has provided a unique opportunity and a means for our Parliament to participate in shaping the country's foreign policy. The Zambian Parliament is also an active member of various international and regional parliamentary bodies through which, matters such as peace-building and conflict issues are deliberated upon.

**Madam President,**

As part of our efforts to promote peace in the region and beyond, our Parliament also participates in Election Observation Missions, with the recent ones having been undertaken to Kenya in 2022 and to the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 2023, to mention but a few. In addition, as a Parliament, we have created an environment where we host high level foreign dignitaries such as Heads of State and Speakers, who are given an opportunity to address our Parliament as a low hanging fruit in enhancing parliamentary diplomacy. The former Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki -Moon, President of Italy Mr Sergio Mattarella and the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Dr Samia Suluhu Hassan have been recently accorded the opportunity to address our Parliament on matters of peace and good governance.

In the same vein, our Parliament, just like many other Parliaments, has established specific Parliamentary Committees that provide effective oversight on Government policies and programmes pertaining to national security, rule of law and democratic governance, which are building blocks for peace and understanding. The establishment of Parliamentary friendship groups with a number of countries, to among other things, foster the exchange of views, best practices and lessons on mutual Parliamentary issues which include, but not limited to, peace, security, democracy and sustainable development, are also evident of our efforts to strengthen diplomatic relations at parliamentary level.

**Madam President,**

In our journey to promote Parliamentary diplomacy, two key issues have come to light, which need to be addressed in order to strengthen how Parliamentary

diplomacy is practised. Firstly, there is need to ensure greater Parliamentary independence, particularly, financial independence in order to address the challenge of 'political tourism,' where Parliamentarians only reproduce or toll the already known positions of their Governments. Secondly, and lastly, you will agree with me that most Parliaments experience high turn-overs, following Parliamentary elections. This leads to inconsistency in the manner in which international matters are dealt with by Parliamentarians, especially that, Parliamentary diplomacy, though important, is not the main realm of Parliamentary work. Therefore, there is need to develop administrative mechanisms for ensuring consistency and continuity in the manner in which Parliaments deal with international matters.

**Madam President,**

Let me conclude by reiterating the fact that, Parliamentary diplomacy is a powerful tool for engaging in global affairs, shaping foreign policy and fostering peaceful international relations. In this regard, allow me to call upon all Parliamentarians to utilise the available avenues to engage in Parliamentary diplomacy, as a viable means for resolving conflicts and building bridges for peace and understanding.

I thank you for your kind attention.

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