

Presentation by Senator Asuquo Ekpenyong at the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Meeting in Geneva – 15th October 2024

Honourable Members of the IPU, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address this assembly on a topic that is not only crucial for the future of our nations, but also for the future of our youth: harnessing science, technology, and innovation (STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future.

In today's rapidly changing world, science and technology are reshaping lives and societies in ways we could only dream of a few decades ago. Ground-breaking advancements in fields such as sustainable energy, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, and innovations to improve water and food security are not only enhancing our quality of life but are also creating pathways toward peace and global sustainability.

These innovations offer solutions to some of the most critical challenges we face today—whether it's ensuring energy security, combating climate change, or achieving equitable access to food and water. They also provide hope for our younger generation, the leaders of tomorrow, who are deeply invested in creating a more peaceful, secure, and sustainable world.

Nigeria, like many nations, understands the pivotal role STI plays in national development. Under the leadership of President Bola Tinubu, our country is making steady strides in leveraging these innovations to foster peace and sustainability. The Nigerian Senate, led by His Excellency Senator Godswill Akpabio, is at the forefront of these efforts, notably through the National Science and Technology Development Agency Act. This legislation serves as a comprehensive framework to foster innovation across key sectors such as renewable energy, healthcare, agriculture, and education.

Equally important is the Cybercrime Act, which safeguards our digital infrastructure, building trust in the technological systems that drive our economy. We are committed to continuing our support for STI projects and the development of critical policies, such as the Energy Transition and National Development Plans, which are essential to Nigeria's sustainable future. These initiatives demonstrate Nigeria's dedication to using technology not only for economic growth but also to ensure peace, stability, and inclusivity.

Yet, we cannot ignore the challenges we face—gaps in infrastructure, funding constraints, and the need for greater international collaboration. This is where organizations like the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) can play a pivotal role.

The IPU, as a global organization representing national parliaments, is uniquely positioned to help Nigeria and other developing nations unlock the full potential of STI for sustainable development. By strengthening legislative frameworks, building capacity, and facilitating knowledge exchange, the IPU can help countries like ours adopt forward-thinking, inclusive policies that are responsive to rapid technological advancements.

Moreover, the IPU can help foster international partnerships between Nigeria and technologically advanced nations, encouraging cross-border collaboration in key areas such as renewable energy, AI, and sustainable agriculture. By connecting Nigerian innovators with their global counterparts, we can accelerate the development of solutions to local and global challenges alike.

It is also crucial to remember that Nigeria's youth—who represent more than 60% of our population—are energized by the possibilities that STI presents. From fintech to renewable energy, they are driving innovation, but they need an enabling environment to reach their full potential. By investing in education, providing access to funding, and fostering international collaboration, we can ensure that they lead the charge in creating a more peaceful and sustainable future for Nigeria.

As we look ahead, let us remember that the key to peace and sustainability lies in our ability to innovate, collaborate, and build resilient systems that uplift all members of society. It is my sincere hope that the IPU will continue to be a steadfast ally to nations like Nigeria, as we work together to harness the transformative power of STI for a better world. Thank you.