



**GENERAL DEBATE ON THE THEME: 'HARNESSING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY  
AND INNOVATION FOR A MORE PEACEFUL AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE'**

**HON R. MTSWENI-TSIPANE, CHAIRPERSON OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
PROVINCES, PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

The Honourable President of the Assembly,

Honourable President of the IPU, Dr. Tulia Ackson,

Honourable Presiding Officers,

Honourable Members; and

Distinguished guests,

I am deeply honoured to address this esteemed Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. As this marks my inaugural participation in the IPU meetings, I extend my heartfelt greetings and best wishes to you all.

It is a privilege to participate and engage in the said debate as we promote dialogue amongst our parliaments and seek collective progress and cooperation.

Honourable President

The essence of peace lies in cooperation and collaboration among diverse nations to achieve our shared interests, rather than conflict.

Today, we would like to emphasise the role of science, technology, and innovation in advancing these crucial objectives for the benefit of humanity.

The health pandemics including the Mpox, have underscored the importance of global cooperation in science and technology and exposed disparities between countries.

The uneven distribution of technological development, with the Global North leading advancement and regulatory decision-making, underlies the necessity for more equity and inclusiveness in global development.

It is therefore essential that parliaments of the Global North play a vital role in advocating for policies that facilitate technology transfer on mutually agreed terms. This will promote knowledge sharing and reduce the risk of leaving behind majority of developing countries.

We would also like to make humble plea for us to urge our governments to finalise a fair and equitable accord to prevent a recurrence of the socio-economic impacts experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Honourable President

Women and girls belong in science and technology. As parliamentarians, it is imperative that we work together to dismantle gender inequities and address hostile work environments.

We must also guarantee equal access to investments and opportunities for research and publishing to ensure women and girls reach their full potential.

Whilst progress has been made in narrowing differences between girls and boys in school enrolment and performance in subjects like math and science. We must acknowledge that much more still needs to be done to involve more girls and women in STEM fields at higher learning institutions.

Initiatives such as the African Girls Can Code initiative in South Africa, a collaboration between the government, United Nations Women, and Siemens, are vital in increasing the participation of young women in coding and technology-driven careers.

These initiatives ultimately enhance women's development and participation in tech-related fields.

Honourable President

South Africa has made remarkable strides in innovation, science, and technology over the past three decades. Notably, our country has been recognised for its exceptional performance in innovation, particularly in the areas of software spending and patents by origin by the 2023 World Intellectual Property Organization Global Innovation Index.

Our collaboration with the World Health Organization to establish local capacity for the development of COVID mRNA technology transfer hubs, stand as a testament to our commitment to contribute significantly to global efforts in vaccine development and manufacturing capacity.

Additionally, our Department of Science and Technology champions advancements in astronomy, supporting the construction of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project. This of course is an ambitious initiative that aims to achieve significant scientific breakthrough in astronomical sciences.

It will address fundamental questions about the origins of the cosmic as well as the evolution of galaxies and black holes over the next 50 years.

As a country, we remain committed to enhance our innovation capacity, empowering our research enterprise, and leveraging partnerships through science diplomacy.

Honourable President

We would like to state that artificial intelligence provides humanity with opportunities to address pressing challenges, offering new possibilities in healthcare, environmental sustainability, transportation, and beyond.

However, it is crucial to ensure that AI's development and **use** are guided by regulations. We must enact thoughtful and forward-looking regulations, that will harness artificial intelligence's potential while mitigating potential negative impacts.

Therefore, Hon Members, let us strive to create a regulatory framework that fosters innovation, protects against harm, and promotes the advancement of artificial intelligence for the collective well-being of humanity.

As I conclude Hon President, we urge members of this assembly, to double our efforts to foster global cooperation, equitable technology sharing, and the inclusion of women and girls in STEM fields.

Working together we can make it possible that the benefits of technological progress are shared by all nations, and that our regulatory framework are ethical and embrace thinking through futures.

We therefore look forward and anticipate these progressive engagements that shall engender our shared values, interests and aspirations.

I Thank you

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