



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

150th IPU Assembly

General Debate

Parliamentary action for social development and justice

**Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on
Violence against Children**

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08 April 2025

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

Madame President, the Hon. Tulia Ackson,

Mr. Secretary-General, the Hon. Martin Chungong,

Distinguished Parliamentarians,

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for the invitation to attend the 150th Assembly of the IPU and to address the general debate on parliamentary action for social development and justice.

This discussion is very timely. Ensuring social development and social justice for all - including children - is needed more than ever, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Due to overlapping and multiple crises worldwide, children who have no responsibility are paying a huge price.

Growing poverty and social exclusion of children are undermining their human rights, protection, and wellbeing.

There are 333 million children living in extreme poverty.

Nearly 1 billion children live in multidimensional poverty.

Children are twice as likely to live in extreme poverty as adults.

Globally, one in four children are living in severe child food poverty.

And we know that poverty and social exclusion act as powerful drivers for violence against children.

Poverty can push children into exploitative situations such as child labor, child marriage, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and recruitment by criminal and armed groups.

Despite many actions to address poverty and social exclusion, progress has been insufficient and unequal, even as the challenges faced by children continue to grow.

Worldwide, only 28.1 per cent of children aged 0–15 years have access to a child or family benefit.

Living in fragile settings, being a migrant or a displaced child, or a child living without primary caregivers or in an institution, can further limit children's access to social protection.

The lack of sustainable, child-sensitive social protection has enormous costs for children, their families, and societies as a whole. The effects can last a lifetime and indeed become intergenerational.

There is the cost to the economy from lost productivity.

There is the cost to human and social capital, with decreases in life expectancy, health, education, and skill levels.

And there is the cost to political capital, with trust in institutions being eroded in ways that can endanger the functioning of democracy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Child-sensitive social protection must be seen as an investment in sustainable, people-centred development and in building human capital, through a life-cycle approach starting in early childhood.

And Parliamentarians have a significant role in advancing this approach.

They support and monitor implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets.

Parliamentarians have a crucial monitoring role, which can ensure accountability for the effective implementation of policies and commitments.

Members of parliament are uniquely positioned to act as an interface between the people and state institutions, and to promote people-centered policies to ensure that no one is left behind.

By connecting with peers from other jurisdictions, parliamentarians facilitate the exchange of knowledge to address emerging challenges, ranging from the climate crisis to the increasing digitalization of our societies.

But parliamentarians also have a crucial role in providing spaces for engaging and bringing together other stakeholders.

Civil society relies heavily on the support of parliaments to keep civic space open and active, providing a counter power that is an essential ingredient of accountability for States.

Parliaments also play a leading role in ensuring children and youth's civic engagement and their involvement in decision-making processes. This happens through, for example, engaging with children and youth parliaments or lowering the voting age to include older teenagers in the electorate.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Less than 5 years remain to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 16.

As we all know well, we are not on track to achieve that objective.

But I firmly believe we can turn this around.

Last year saw an unprecedented mobilization culminating in the first Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children. Almost all the countries represented here today took part in the Conference and made concrete pledges to tackle poverty and social exclusion, as social protection is an integral part of ending violence against children.

We need to keep up this momentum.

We must identify key opportunities to do so at national, regional, and global level, including the landmark World Summit for Social Development that will take place later this year.

Together, we can build peaceful, just, and inclusive societies for all, leaving no one behind.

Thank you.