



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Statement by the IPU

Delivered by Ambassador Anda Filip
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Madam Speaker,
Distinguished parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour to be here today in beautiful Cape Town, South Africa, for the second edition of the P20 Meeting of Women Parliamentarians. The IPU President could not be with us today due to pressing commitments in her home country, however I am pleased to deliver these remarks on her behalf.

At a time of mounting crises, the need for solidarity and collective solutions is urgent. We welcome the decision by the Parliament of South Africa to focus this Parliamentary Meeting on the key issue of global solidarity, equality and sustainability. Indeed, these objectives, your work and parliamentary diplomacy offer valuable opportunities to strengthen cooperation across borders, to build trust, and to place citizens' concerns at the heart of international dialogue and action. But to succeed, we must face an undeniable truth: these objectives cannot be met as long as inequality, especially gender inequality, persists.

Despite progress, women today account for only 27 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide and just 22 per cent of Speakers. Their perspectives remain largely absent from policy-making, and too many continue to face discrimination, harassment, and even violence.

The IPU's own research has shown that one in four women MPs has suffered physical attacks, and more than 80 per cent of those surveyed have endured psychological abuse during their term. Such realities are unacceptable.

Parity must therefore become the norm rather than the exception. It is not simply a matter of fairness; it is a matter of legitimacy and effectiveness. Parliaments that reflect the full diversity of their societies are better equipped to respond to people's needs, and policies shaped by equal participation are undeniably more inclusive, representative and sustainable.

In some parliaments, parity is now a reality. This was possible through political will and strong legal frameworks. The IPU is working to make such progress universal. Earlier this year, at the Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians held in Mexico City, MPs adopted a comprehensive Plan of Action for Parity. This provides a practical toolbox to accelerate equality through quotas, reforms in campaign financing, zero-tolerance for harassment, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that commitments are enforced.

This message was echoed at the 15th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament in Geneva, which called for gender-sensitive parliaments, and for women's equal presence in diplomacy, peace and security, climate action and the governance of science and technology. These efforts are anchored in a growing body of normative commitments. The IPU Kigali Declaration of 2022 – endorsed by all of your parliaments - affirmed the need for parliaments that are gender-sensitive, inclusive and safe, and for law-making and budgeting that close persistent gaps. And most recently, the CEDAW Committee's General Recommendation No. 40 on women's equal and inclusive representation in decision-making systems—co-developed with the IPU—underscored that parity is not aspirational. It is a binding international responsibility and a prerequisite for democratic legitimacy.

The task before us is therefore clear. We cannot hope to deliver global solidarity while women remain underrepresented in peace processes and parliaments. We cannot achieve sustainability while women's knowledge and leadership are being side-tracked. We cannot build trust in new technologies if women are excluded from shaping the rules that govern artificial intelligence. And we cannot secure inclusive growth if discriminatory laws and unequal care responsibilities continue to hold women back.

This is why the IPU has placed gender equality at the heart of its work. Our Forum of Women Parliamentarians, celebrating 40 years this year, remains a vital platform for advancing women's leadership. And our campaign on "Gender Equality: Action by Action" reminds us that progress is built step by step—through gender-responsive laws, through reforms to institutional culture, through stronger protections against violence and discrimination, and through accountability. All of our

Member Parliaments have signed to these commitments, and together we can help bring about positive change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The challenges ahead can be met if we remain steadfast in our purpose. Parliamentary diplomacy provides the means to work together across differences and borders. But solidarity, equality and sustainability will remain out of reach unless gender equality is at the centre of the agenda.

On behalf of the IPU, I therefore invite you to join us in this effort, to build parliaments and societies where women and men share power equally, and where progress for half of humanity becomes progress for all.

Thank you.