



Hon. Uchenna Harris Okonkwo

IDEMILI NORTH/IDEMILI SOUTH FEDERAL CONSTITUENCY, ANAMBRA STATE

Deputy Chairman, House Committee on Food & Drugs Administration & Control

FEDERAL HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE

**ENHANCING GOOD GOVERNANCE AND EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES
THROUGH INCLUSIVITY, TRUST, AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) – Arusha, Tanzania



Protocols duly observed.

Distinguished parliamentarians, esteemed delegates, ladies, and gentlemen.

It is a profound honour to join colleagues from across the globe here in Arusha, Tanzania, to confront an issue that beats at the very heart of our democratic project: how we can enhance good governance and empower our communities through inclusivity, trust, and opportunity for all.

I speak today not just as a Member of Nigeria's House of Representatives, but as a young parliamentarian and the Deputy Chairman of the House Committee on NAFDAC our national agency tasked with safeguarding the quality and safety of food, medicines, and regulated products.

Holding these responsibilities has taught me a fundamental truth: good governance is not measured merely by the volume of legislation we pass, but by the tangible confidence our people have that those laws and institutions actually work for them.

Across Africa, and indeed across the world, our democracies are grappling with shared challenges: growing gaps between the expectations of our citizens and their confidence in public institutions.

Our people are asking urgent, legitimate questions:

Do I have a voice?

MEMBER COMMITTEES ON:

Banking regulation, Defense, Emergency & disaster management, Foreign affairs, Communication, Sports, AIDS, Tuberculosis & Malaria Control, Federal Character, Interior Public Assets, SME, Public Sector/Institutional Reforms, Cooperation and Integration In Africa, Nigeria-Indonesia Relations, Nigeria-China Relations (Deputy Chairman), Youth Development.

Address: National Assembly Complex, Three Arms Zone, Abuja, FCT. Tel: 08105449050 Email: honucheokonkwo@gmail.com

Can I truly participate?

Will my government listen to me?

And will my children inherit a fair opportunity to succeed?

How we answer these questions will dictate the future resilience of our democracies. To answer them effectively, we must build on three defining pillars.

The first pillar is **inclusivity**.

As a young parliamentarian representing a nation driven by its youth, I firmly believe that young people can no longer simply be placated as the "leaders of tomorrow." They must be active, equal partners in governance today. This exact standard must apply to women, persons with disabilities, minority groups, and communities that have historically been pushed to the margins of economic and political power. Parliament must be the mirror in which every citizen sees themselves reflected, and the institution where every community knows its voice matters.

The second pillar is **trust**.

Trust is the true currency of democracy. Yet, it cannot be mandated by the government; it must be meticulously earned. In my daily oversight of food and drug regulation in Nigeria, I witness this reality firsthand. When a mother administers medicine to her sick child, she is not just trusting the science she is trusting her government to have ensured that medicine is safe. When a citizen buys food at the market, they are trusting that the standards designed to protect them are strictly enforced.

This principle extends far beyond public health. Citizens must be able to trust their electoral boards, their justice systems, and their parliaments. And that trust only flourishes in the sunlight of transparency, accountability, and visible results.

The third pillar is **opportunity**.

Democracy must deliver dividends beyond the ballot box. It must cultivate an environment where people have a genuine, structural opportunity to elevate their lives. For our youth in particular, democracy must translate into quality education, modern skills, thriving entrepreneurship, technological innovation,

and accessible capital. When citizens have opportunities, communities grow stronger. And when communities grow stronger, nations achieve lasting stability.

As parliamentarians, our mandate extends far beyond the chamber walls. We are called to be bridge-builders between the state and the street. We must transform participation into policy, policy into opportunity, and opportunity into shared prosperity.

Nigeria's democratic journey much like the journeys of the many great nations represented in this room is continuously evolving. We have celebrated progress, we have weathered profound challenges, and we continue to learn.

But one lesson remains undeniably clear: democracy is only as strong as the stakeholders it creates.

So, from here in Arusha, let us reaffirm a simple but powerful creed:

No democracy can survive without the trust of its people.

No community can be truly empowered without inclusion.

And no society can secure lasting peace without opportunity.

Our ultimate task as parliamentarians is to weave these three threads together. Because when we include our people, earn their trust, and expand their horizons, we do more than just strengthen governance.

We secure democracy itself.

Thank you.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and may our collective efforts continue to uplift the lives of the people we are so profoundly privileged to serve.