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Speech by IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong

Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) Global Parliamentarians Meeting:
*'Parliamentarians of Climate Threatened Nations Championing
Planetary Prosperity'*

Virtual presentation, 25 November 2020

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to speak during today's virtual Global Parliamentarians Meeting of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF). This event marks an important occasion as this is the first global meeting of parliamentarians of the CVF, and therefore the first time that this group of parliamentarians has come together to discuss the challenges and opportunities in tackling the climate emergency.

Bringing together the parliamentarians of CVF countries marks an important step in strengthening the role of parliaments in implementing the Paris Agreement and addressing climate change. Nearly all of the CVF Member States are also IPU members, thus this event serves as an excellent opportunity for us to reflect on ways to strengthen our joint engagement on this topic, and more effectively mobilize climate action, both collectively and individually at the country-level. Mr. Saber Chowdhury, is an honorary IPU President who has always shown great leadership on climate issues, both at home and globally. I commend the work of Mr. Chowdhury and the other distinguished panelists in championing the work of parliamentarians in the CVF. This is an important and timely initiative.

It has been hard time and again, climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time. The impacts of climate change can severely undermine development gains. Addressing the climate emergency has become even more important in the wake of COVID-19. The pandemic has served as a wake-up call for countries around the globe and highlighted the fragilities that exist within society and our economic structures. Many of the people who have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic are also likely to be dealing with severe challenges created by climate change.

Given the urgency of the climate emergency, implementing the Paris Agreement is more critical than ever. The Paris Agreement is an international agreement, but it must be supported by strong national level-action to be effective. Parliamentarians must play a critical role in this process.

Needless to say, Parliamentarians can and must ensure that legislative responses to climate change are both nationally appropriate and aligned with the Paris Agreement. They must also allocate adequate funding to implement the Paris Agreement, and develop mechanisms for government oversight which include clear provisions for enforcement and monitoring of climate-related legislation. I am sure we all want to see stronger links between parliament and civil society organizations working on climate change to ensure the needs of the most at-risk constituents are met.

Countries that have signed the Paris Agreement have also agreed to submit revised and enhanced nationally determined contributions (NDCs) by the end of 2020.

Parliaments can use their oversight powers to ensure governments prepare revised NDCs and that these commitments are translated into legislation at the national level.

The IPU remains fully committed to supporting parliaments in implementing the Paris Agreement. A resolution was adopted at the 141st IPU Assembly in October 2019 urging all Parties to implement the Paris Agreement, and the Declaration of the 5th World Conference of Speakers of Declaration in August 2020 reaffirms parliamentarians' commitment to Paris Agreement implementation. The Declaration also emphasizes the need to transition to a climate-neutral economy to build more resilient societies and highlights the economic and social benefits of reducing global carbon emissions.

The time is now for action, we must act urgently. Implementation is the name of the game. The IPU is working with partners to build the capacity of parliaments to address climate change and climate-related disasters. For example, the IPU is partnering with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) to produce a toolkit on strengthening parliamentarians' engagement in addressing disasters and climate-related risks. The IPU is also recently collaborating with the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to build the knowledge of parliamentarians on strengthening legislative responses to climate change in the context of Paris Agreement implementation. Furthermore, the IPU has been working with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to develop a joint policy note for parliamentarians that outlines a 'green' recovery approach to the COVID-19 pandemic that will also help countries' fulfil their international commitments under the Paris Agreement.

We look forward to close collaboration with the CVF parliament programme being launched today. Now is the time for parliaments to take stronger and more urgent action on climate change. The legislative, budgetary, oversight and representation actions of parliamentarians today will have a long-term effect on the planet's future. Parliamentarians should seize the opportunities created through the Paris Agreement to drive transformational change for a healthier planet and society. The avenues for knowledge-sharing and collaboration created through the IPU and CVF can support parliamentarians to take more concerted and ambitious climate action.