



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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IPU Statement

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Commission on the Status of Women

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Chairperson,

It is a great honour for me to take the floor on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. My name is Susan Kihika. I am a Senator from Kenya and President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

Last week, 115 parliamentarians from 35 countries gathered here in New York for the annual Parliamentary Day organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women, in order to discuss the priority themes of the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

We shared examples from around the world that show we are making progress on laws, programmes and policies for gender equality. But we also learned that we share common challenges in the Global North and South alike when it comes to providing women with adequate social protection coverage, public services, and infrastructure according to their lifecycles, and in all types of work, including in the informal sector.

As parliamentarians, we recognize our role in ensuring that social protection, public services and infrastructure deliver for women and girls, and that our action in these areas has the potential to redress existing gender inequalities. Here are three specific ways we can do that.

First, parliamentarians can make and pass laws to give legal status to social protection and gender responsive budgeting. Without this legal status, there is little transparency around who is eligible for benefits; debates about entitlements and gender roles might occur each time that parliaments vote on national budgets; and social protection schemes risk being cancelled when governments change.

Second, parliaments can exercise government oversight to see to it that social protection, public services and infrastructure are designed and implemented with women's needs and realities in mind—and that they are

adequately financed. Parliamentarians can hold governments accountable in particular through:

- a) Adequate and transparent taxation;
- b) Public investments in policies that lift women out of poverty and offer good-quality, affordable childcare infrastructure, and
- c) Gender-responsive budgeting to assess where public resources have been allocated and spent.

We need to recognize that gender-responsive budgeting and taxation policies are investments, not expenditures!

Third, parliamentarians can do more to consult with citizens, including young people, and build political will to achieve gender equality. This involves going to different and less connected communities to hear about the needs of women in the design of public policies. These consultations must include women of all ages, geographic locations, ethnic origins, abilities and types of employment. Likewise, we should provide civil society with greater opportunities to provide feedback so we can learn if state policies, services and infrastructure alleviate or exacerbate effects of structural inequalities.

Finally, CSW63 coincides with the release of the 2019 global data on women's political representation, published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN Women. Let us be reminded that still, only 24 per cent of national parliamentarians and 20 per cent of ministers are women. In only 19 countries do women serve as heads of state or government. Many of the gender equality policies that we enjoy today were introduced and championed by women leaders with the support of women's movements. One sure way to get better policies on social protection, public services and infrastructure, is to have more women making them.

Thank you.