



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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# Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Paving the path: Forum on women's participation in political leadership in  
Nigeria: Past, present and future  
Opening session

16 September 2021

Honourable Speaker of the House of Representatives,  
Honourable Chairperson of the House Committee on Women's Affairs and Social  
Development,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to address you at the opening of this important event on *Paving the path – forum on women's participation in political leadership in Nigeria: Past, present and future*.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is glad to support the National Assembly and other partners in convening this forum.

Equal participation of men and women in decision-making is at the core of a genuine democracy. It is a precondition for good governance, sustainable development and peace. When more women are included in political processes, policies that benefit the whole of society are developed and implemented.

The event that begins today is another milestone in the National Assembly's path towards promoting an inclusive, representative and, therefore, democratic parliament.

In 2020, on the occasion of the virtual *High-level Conference on strengthening women's and youth participation in the National Assembly of Nigeria* that was convened by the IPU, the National Assembly and the CEDAW Committee, I was heartened to witness strong commitment from leaders, within the National Assembly and beyond, to strengthen the participation of women and youth in Nigeria's parliament. Now is the time to move from words to action.

At a time of pandemic, consensus-building is crucial so we can build forward more resilient and more equal, through more inclusive governance. And the ongoing Constitutional review process provides the much-needed momentum to reach this objective.

Over the past months, the IPU has been pleased to continue to provide technical support to the National Assembly and share existing good practices from across the globe in the area of women's political participation. You will be hearing later today about some of those good practices. I hope these experiences will prove useful in building a solid base for the necessary change in Nigeria.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Progress is possible, but it won't happen alone. Spheres of power have been male dominated for too long, so it takes true leadership to change this picture.

IPU data is very clear. Strong institutional measures are key to open up politics to women. In 2020, parliaments that applied gender quotas elected nearly 12% more women to their lower houses than those that did not have such quotas.

Two countries to have recently achieved gender parity in their parliaments - Mexico and the United Arab Emirates - have done so thanks to mandatory gender quotas. In both countries, this move was part of an overall national agenda to advance gender equality across the board.

From a regional perspective, over the past 25 years, Africa has moved from 10% to 25% women MPs.

Nigeria can and should lead the way. I am therefore happy to see that the National Assembly is taking collaborative steps - nationally and internationally - to achieve this objective.

Rest assured that you can always count on the IPU to support the National Assembly's efforts in making the parliamentary institution more inclusive.

I wish you all a successful forum, and I look forward to constructive and action-oriented outcomes.

Thank you.