

President of the IPU Speech during the First Global Parliamentary Summit on Counter-Terrorism 9 September 2021, Vienna

Honourable Speakers,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to open the First Global Parliamentary Summit on Counter-Terrorism. This Summit comes at a critical time, a time where we cannot say that the world has won its war against terrorism; terrorism still persists, as a plague, decimating lives, development, and the prosperity of people. As you all know, the IPU is the cradle of political multilateralism; 133 years ago, the IPU was founded on the principles of peace and dialogue, and in 1925, at the 23rd IPU Conference in Washington D.C., there was the first mention of the act of terrorism. In this regard, terrorism was on the IPU agenda far before the establishment of the current world order and the IPU continues its commitment to counter-terrorism today.

Although the world is trying to counter terrorism today, many obstacles impede a comprehensive approach. One of these obstacles is the question of how to define terrorism. There have been many attempts in the search of a definition, but yet, this has not stopped the world from countering terrorism, nor terrorists from attempting to counter peace. Whatever the definition, terrorism should be met with justice.

Justice is the only way to counter terrorism, justice founded on legislation that protects society from the dangers of terrorism. Justice is a process and a result of statehood and strong parliaments, with their power to legislate, have oversight, and budget for these processes. Without justice, countering terrorism itself can become an element conducive to the spread of terrorism. Establishing strong and inclusive parliaments, capable of delivering justice, is the first line of defence in countering terrorism, leaving no marginalised individuals behind who may be susceptible to radicalisation.

As parliamentarians, our roles as representatives of the people make us principle stakeholders in efforts of countering terrorism. Governments, due to their executive authorities and mandate, often have the upper hand in countering terrorism, as they are responsible for State security. Nonetheless, parliaments have the upper hand in prevention, which is far more effective than countering terrorism. They are the key stakeholders responsible for addressing gaps of implementation between United Nations strategies, and national legislation, through their oversight of implementation and their budgeting mandate.

Ultimately, parliamentarians are essential for the success of global efforts in countering terrorism, and this is why the IPU is holding this global Summit today. This Summit is the first of its kind at the global level and will be followed by biennial conferences. It is an important opportunity to bring together the United Nations and parliamentarians, in order for the United Nations to directly listen to the concerns of parliamentarians to accurately assess global needs.

United Nations and IPU resolutions, as the basis of countering terrorism, require substantial efforts in reaching consensus for the adoption of resolutions. However, this does not mean that when we succeed in adopting resolutions in the United Nations or the IPU, that we have won the war against terrorism. A success in New York or in Geneva does not have effects in Niger, Mali, nor in any other place unless it is followed by legislation and true cooperation with people of the countries themselves, in order to have measurable impacts on the ground. Ultimately, discussions on definitions in the United Nations, in the IPU, and in parliaments do not have substantial impacts on the modalities and processes on the ground, in areas controlled by terrorist ideologies. What the world needs right now, is action, serious action, with concrete action in producing national laws.

Finally, we can only counter terrorism if we find ways to block its financing through unified positions and truly holistic approaches amongst governments, parliaments, and international organisations. We must connect the links, review our policies, and secure the commitment of governments to this cause. This Summit is for people to listen to each other; for the United Nations to listen to parliamentarians, and parliamentarians to listen to the United Nations. Finally, we should all listen to the voices of the victims of terrorism and focus on the deteriorating situation in the Sahel countries, which continues to increase incentives to join extremism groups, whilst simultaneously attracting terrorists from around the world. This situation constitutes a serious threat to both regional and global security. We should not stand still while the people of Sahel are suffering.

I wish you all a successful meeting, and the continuous success of your efforts.