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# Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

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IPU-UN Women Parliamentary Event

## The role of women's leadership and gender-responsive parliaments in climate action

Geneva, 14 March 2022

Madam Deputy Executive Director of UN Women (Asa Regner),  
Madam First Vice-President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians (Hala Fayez),  
Distinguished participants,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to be with you at this year's annual parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 66th Commission on the Status of Women.

This meeting is one of the most important annual events that contribute a parliamentary perspective into crucial UN processes such as the one led by the Commission on the Status of Women.

I thank you all for joining us today. I also take the opportunity to thank our partner UN Women for co-hosting this event. Dear Asa, we were together last year to open the parliamentary meeting and it gives me great pleasure to join forces with you again. I look forward to our continued cooperation in advancing gender equality, upholding women's rights and prioritizing women's empowerment in all fields and at all levels.

We are meeting today to discuss *The role of women's leadership and gender-responsive parliaments in climate action*. Climate action is a topic of great urgency in which the role of parliaments is central. International agreements on climate change must be transposed to national legislation to be enforceable and to make an impactful difference. The success of climate change regulation depends on oversight of budgets and policies. Parliaments are also there to bridge the gap between constituents, governments, and the international community: a necessary step to get everyone on board for sustainable and effective climate action.

As we know from the COVID-19 and previous pandemics, women are differently affected when it comes to crises.

Women are a collective strength in confronting all crises. Climate change is no different. While women are disproportionately impacted by climate change, they are also an essential resource in mitigating it. Studies have found that there is a strong correlation between the percentage of seats occupied by women in national parliaments and the prioritization of climate change policy associated with lower carbon emissions. The greater representation of women in parliaments leads to

countries adopting more stringent climate change policies. Similar trends are also seen in environmental and disaster risk reduction policy areas.

Our report on Women in Parliament released just a few days ago shows us that the global share of women in parliament reached 26.1 percent at the beginning of 2022. As of the beginning of the year, 22 per cent of Speakers of Parliament are women. These are the highest shares of women in parliamentary leadership the world has ever seen. Now, in five countries up from three last year, women account for 50 percent or more members in their lower or single house of parliament: Rwanda, Cuba, Nicaragua, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates.

There is much to celebrate and be proud of. The successes we are seeing could not have been reached without the strong support and action of each and every one of you. However, we must note that the pace of progress has been slow. At the current rate, it will take us another 40 years before achieving gender parity in parliaments around the world.

To strengthen our concerted effort towards climate action, we must strengthen women's leadership in politics. We must see that women's representation is not just a question of equality and fairness, it is a path towards a more sustainable future for everyone.

Beyond more gender equal parliaments however, we must also keep in mind the need for gender-responsive parliaments. This year, we are celebrating the tenth anniversary of the IPU Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments. Parliaments that respond to the needs of men and women in their structure, composition, methods and work; institutions that remove barriers to women's full participation, need to be a priority as we respond to climate change.

Gender-sensitive and -responsive parliaments make it possible to introduce legal and policy reforms for gender-responsive climate action. We need to scale up political will and transformative actions towards advancing gender-responsive parliamentary climate and environmental action through legislation and policies. Parliaments must move towards an inclusive green economy, and integrate green approaches to COVID-19 recovery efforts while considering gendered needs. These actions must start from within parliaments, through shifting to greener, more environmentally-friendly processes and ways of working.

Now, we turn our attention from what we must do to what we are going to do. Let us identify how we move forward together. How do we work towards greater women's participation and gender-responsive parliaments in order to strengthen climate action? What are cases we can look at for inspiration? We are hopeful that your discussion today will show us the way.

I look forward to your deliberations and thank you for your attention.