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# Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

The impact of climate change on displacement and human security

Parliamentary dialogue with the Special Advisor for Climate Action to the  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

Webinar, 21 September 2022

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this parliamentary dialogue on the impact of climate change on displacement and human security with the Special Advisor for Climate Action to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). I would like to thank UNHCR for co-organizing this event with the IPU. This is an excellent opportunity to bring the voice of parliaments to the table on this extremely important topic.

There is no escaping the fact that climate change is now a global existential threat. Devastating floods, droughts and wildfires have become all too common sights. If climate change continues on its current path, there is no corner of the globe that will be spared.

In 2021, an estimated 24 million men and women, boys and girls were internally displaced due to climate disasters. Climate change was behind many of those. It is also making it increasingly harder to sustain livelihoods and is pushing people further into poverty, increasing food insecurity and wiping away hard-earned development gains.

We know that it is the most vulnerable populations that face the greatest risks; and refugees and internally displaced men and women, boys and girls, who have left their homes behind are even more vulnerable than others. We also know that the great majority of forcibly displaced men and women are hosted by countries that are heavily affected by global warming, placing an additional challenge on host communities and making it more difficult to provide protection and inclusion.

The links between climate change, displacement and human security are obvious but nevertheless complex. These challenges need to be addressed together when looking at prevention, mitigation and adaptation responses and strategies.

And we cannot wait any longer. Research tells us that climate-related disasters could double the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance to over 200 million each year by 2050 if ambitious climate action and disaster risk reduction is not undertaken. Displacement is also occurring at a faster pace than the creation of sustainable solutions.

What are some of the responses we need to consider? Respect for international humanitarian and human rights law is a priority. Parliaments have a critical role to play in ensuring human rights mechanisms and refugee protection measures, including the Global Compact on Refugees, are implemented and enforced through strong national legislation.

Climate and displacement responses must also go hand-in-hand in policy making. Parliaments can ensure that agreements and commitments on both issues are jointly addressed and translated into comprehensive national legislation that thoroughly recognizes the interlinkages between climate and displacement, and the impact of climate

change on displaced populations and host communities. They can ensure adequate budget allocations are available to support climate change adaptation, and to provide support to those who have been displaced and those who host displaced communities. As representatives of the people, parliaments must represent displaced constituents and use political platforms to raise awareness of their situation and advocate for the rights. Access to protection and assistance in the face of emergency situations as well as in the face of slow-onset climate stressors, is also key. Attention must be paid to building resilience in the long-term. It is not only about responding to crises, but also about being proactive to avoid crises that lead to or impact displacement in the first place.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), with its membership of 178 national parliaments, has made addressing climate change a top priority. Tackling the climate crisis is at the heart of the new IPU strategy from 2022-2026. The strategy includes a special focus on strengthening the inclusion of marginalized and vulnerable populations whom we know are the most at risk of displacement or hardest hit by climate change.

Earlier this year, the IPU Member Parliaments endorsed the Nusa Dua Declaration which explicitly recognizes the growing threat of climate-related displacement, particularly in resource-scarce conflict situations. It calls for the upholding of rights of persons displaced by climate change, and for parliamentarians to reflect climate-related displacement issues in national laws and to guarantee accountability when rights are violated.

Last year, the IPU and the Adaptation at Altitude programme co-organized a global webinar on climate change and forced migration in mountain areas to explore opportunities for enhancing parliaments' role in aligning and harmonizing national policies on climate change, disasters, and human mobility. The event placed particular emphasis on the importance of ensuring that climate-related displacement was addressed across policy areas and that principles of protection and inclusion were prioritized. The active participation of displaced persons in both policymaking and implementation of solutions to address displacement and climate change was also stressed.

Colleagues, the time for action is now. We must build on this momentum and work together to strengthen parliamentary engagement and capacity to address this issue. At the upcoming parliamentary meeting at COP27, we expect the interlinkages between climate change and displaced populations to be an important point of discussion.

The webinar that we are holding today offers a much-needed platform for parliaments to learn from each other on critical climate, displacement and human security issues. I think this an excellent opportunity for honest, critical dialogue on the challenges and opportunities for parliaments to take a leading role in identifying solutions to this monumental challenge.

I look forward to the outcomes of the discussion and wish you a fruitful event.