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146th IPU Assembly Manama (11–15 March 2023)

Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Mitigating the impact of security threats by building resilience in the Sahel

Manama, 11 March 2023

Distinguished Vice-President,
Parliamentarians, HLAG Members,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here at this third thematic meeting of the Call of the Sahel, in which we will discuss the role of parliamentarians in mitigating the impact of security threats by building resilience in the Sahel.

The Call of the Sahel initiative is one of the most important initiatives in the work program of the IPU Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism Programme, which seeks to support the Sahel countries in their effort to counter the threat of terrorism. This region has become the global center of terrorism, it is a vast and desert region favors the establishment of terrorist groups, since it is difficult to control it in its entirety. If we count the five countries of the G5 Sahel alone, they cover over 5 million square kilometers (5,100,000 km²): this is 17% of the area of Africa; it is 50% of the area of Europe, it is 51% of the area of the United States. The task of countering terrorism in the Sahel is in the interest of the whole international community.

Over the past decade, the Sahel has seen the largest increase of terrorist-related fatalities in the world. Countries like Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger face an existential crisis, which threatens to spread to surrounding countries. The damage done by terrorist groups is increasing exponentially. According to the Global Terrorism Index of 2022, the number of deaths caused by terrorism has more than doubled in Niger since 2020, and similar growth has been witnessed in Mali and Burkina Faso over the last few years.

Terrorism must be attacked at its roots. The security approach is an essential part of fighting terrorism, but it is the final part. However, it is better to prevent a disease than to cure it. We must not forget that most of those who turn to terrorism do so in frustration of limited opportunities and hungry mouths. We must also think of a way to provide economic opportunities to those who are most in need, and to provide hope to those that are without it.

That is why the IPU wants the Call of the Sahel not to be just another set of endless meetings, we wish that this initiative has a positive and tangible impact on the population, with a shift towards concrete, stronger, more coherent, sufficient and appropriate actions in the fight against terrorism. The Call of the Sahel is built on the priorities and fundamental rights of those who live daily and who pay the heavy, environmental and humanitarian price of this scourge.

Parliamentarians are on the front line in the creation of these conditions of peace because they hold the lever of budgetary allocations and legislative instruments and are at the centre of control of the action of the executive.

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They must send a strong and firm signal to the international community through concrete actions and measures on the ground.

It is for all of the above that we have developed the Call of the Sahel, which aims at five main areas, we have held two thematic meetings, one on the environment, the second on communities held in Algeria, and today this third, which will focus on security issues. There will be two more meetings for the rest of this year on development and education, all of them will collect conclusions that we will later transform into specific projects to be developed in the countries of the region, with the help of the international and regional community.

I urge all Sahel country's parliamentarians to be this initiative's promoters and to work together with us. We have great hope for the Call of the Sahel. We are delighted with the dynamic demonstrated in the two previous meetings, which are a testament of the participants' high interest, and willpower for moving from meetings and discussion to real and concert action.

Thank you.