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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Second Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)
Parliamentary Network

Manama, 13 March 2023

Your Excellency, Madam Speaker of the Parliament of Azerbaijan,
Distinguished Speakers of Parliament,
Honourable Parliamentarians,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour to address you today at this second conference of the Parliamentary Network of the Non-Aligned Movement. Since its inception and official launch two years ago, on the occasion of the 143rd IPU Assembly in Madrid, the IPU has been a proud supporter of the effort to bring a parliamentary scope to the activities of the NAM.

Indeed, by harvesting the organic synergies between our organizations, the role of Members of Parliament as critical stakeholders of the international community can be bolstered. Undeniably, developing an inter-parliamentary dimension to global processes and inter-governmental organizations is essential to securing and sustaining their democratic legitimacy, as well as assuring executive branches are accountable for their global commitments.

This is in line with the new IPU Strategy introduced last year, which ascertains that parliaments ought not to work in silos. Rather, they must endeavour to cooperate with key actors of international affairs – such as the Non-Aligned Movement – in order to build bridges, overcome division, and confront the numerous difficulties our world faces today, guided by our shared values of solidarity, equality, inclusivity, respect, and integrity. On that note, let me applaud your leadership, Madam Speaker, and hope that you and your colleagues achieve every goal you set for yourselves to connect the citizens you represent with the activities of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Dear friends,

At this pivotal moment, you have gathered here to deliberate upon one of the greatest challenges of our time: to devise an effective and comprehensive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that lays the groundwork for a more democratic, sustainable, and equitable future.

The pandemic inflicted unprecedented difficulties upon the world, tested our resilience, and uncovered the weaknesses of our political institutions and economic systems. As the global community strives to recover from this tragedy, it is crucial to acknowledge that women, youth and minorities have borne the brunt of its effects. You, my esteemed parliamentarians, need to be at the forefront of efforts to assure a rights-driven democratic recovery, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of these groups, as well as the current climate crisis our planet is facing.

At the IPU, we have strived to spur policy change and worked closely with parliaments to strengthen inclusivity and representativeness. Last year, we celebrated the tenth anniversary of our Plan of action

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for gender-sensitive parliaments. We convened the 14th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament in Tashkent and adopted the Kigali Declaration at the 145th IPU Assembly. In these meetings, we reaffirmed our resolve that gender equality and gender mainstreaming must guide all parliamentary work, and we outlined a robust plan of action to do so. We have the tools at our disposal; it is now the time to suit actions to words and ensure that gender sensitivity is a foundational element of every single pandemic recovery plan.

As COVID-19 raged on, so did the growing divide between young individuals with access to resources and those without. The pandemic led to the most significant interruption to schooling in human history, bearing an impact on 1.6 billion youth. Many were forced to drop out of school or forgo further education to support themselves and their families, which will have long-lasting consequences on their future prospects and earning potential, further entrenching these inequalities. Thus, it is paramount that the experiences and perspectives of young people inform our post-pandemic policies.

This is not possible, however, if young people continue to live at the margins of politics. At the IPU, we have worked tirelessly to decrease the entry barriers to the political world, promoting youth quotas, building the capacity of young MPs, and gathering data on youth participation to inform and motivate further progress. On that note, I would like to call upon you to join more than 1'000 signatories to our campaign "I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament".

Tackling the existential climate crisis that our planet is facing also constitutes a top priority focus area for the IPU, as evidenced in our new strategy. In 2022, when our parliaments met in Indonesia for the 144th Assembly, we adopted the Nusa Dua Declaration to mobilize parliamentarians on climate change. In that declaration, as you may remember, we conveyed our commitment to accelerate a clean energy transition for a green COVID-19 recovery, incentivizing green investments and prioritizing budget allocations for low-emission activities.

Indeed, building back better must mean building back greener.

As you walk through the corridors of this ongoing Assembly, you will find that climate action is once again taking centre stage. We are launching a new campaign called "Parliaments for the Planet" as well as inviting MPs to tell us how they are tackling the climate emergency at the Special accountability segment of our General Debate. And this is because the urgency and seriousness of the matter require our utmost attention, our ultimate action, and our highest standard of accountability. In this regard, I invite you to support the "Parliaments for the Planet" campaign, find common ground through multilateralism, and, most importantly, mainstream ecological action in your day-to-day work back home.

As we traverse towards post-pandemic recovery, it is vital to acknowledge the indispensable character of parliamentary cooperation and solidarity. In that regard, I want to commend you for the establishment and blooming of the NAM Parliamentary Network and wish you every success in your debates.

Let me assure you that the IPU is committed to cooperating with you and achieving our shared goal of an inclusive, equitable, and sustainable post-pandemic recovery, recognizing that our present actions will determine the fate of generations to come.

Thank you for your attention!