



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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146th IPU Assembly Manama (11–15 March 2023)

Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

I Say Yes campaign reception

Manama, 13 March 2023

Dear friends,

I would like to thank the Parliament of Bahrain, and its young parliamentarians, for hosting this reception. Since the very beginning of the *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign, Bahrain has been at the forefront of its promotion. I wish to express my appreciation for Bahrain's leadership in empowering youth.

The IPU youth movement has come a long way. I remember its early days very well. Some of you may know that, before I was Secretary General, I was Secretary of the Standing Committee that negotiated the resolution that started this movement back in 2010. I remember the passion of the core group of young MPs who built this movement, brick by brick. I am pleased that it has blossomed into one of the IPU's flagship areas, and that it has transformed our Assemblies and our community of parliaments to be more diverse and inclusive.

We have a lot to be proud of. But we cannot rest on our laurels. Today, youth remain vastly underrepresented in parliaments. Less than 3% of MPs worldwide are under 30, and 37% of chambers of parliament have no MPs under 30. We still have much work to do. And all of us – regardless of our age – have an important role to play.

This is why this campaign is so important. It is a concrete way to personally get involved for transformative change. Over 1,000 people, including 500 MPs and over 45 Speakers, have already signed up. And we have seen impressive results: from the creation of youth caucuses in Zambia and Zimbabwe, to the lowering of ages of eligibility in Paraguay.

At our last Assembly in Kigali, we set a target to sign up 100 MPs and 10 Speakers of parliament to the campaign. This endeavour was a resounding success. But here, in Manama, we want to beat this record, and make this the most successful Assembly for the campaign yet.

So, if you have not done so already, I encourage all of you to sign up to the campaign at the booth right here. It only takes a few minutes. But it is a meaningful step to join forces with us in empowering youth.

We all need to work together to make our parliaments more inclusive of young people. Here, inclusion means that young people who can vote are eligible for office. It means parliaments that bring in measures like youth quotas, and youth caucuses, to better include youth. We at the IPU are happy to be your allies in these efforts.

I wish to thank all of you once again for joining us, and for being part of our youth movement.

Thank you.

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