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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Making child rights matter: Promoting cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations Committee on the rights of the child

15 February 2024

Dear Madam Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,
Dear Ms. Kiladze,
Dear Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child,
Dear Representative of UNICEF,
Dear panellists,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to welcome you all to this important briefing, which unfortunately a longstanding commitment has prevented me from attending.

I was pleased to hear that so many of you had registered for this meeting, which is a testimony of your commendable efforts to promote the rights of children, who are spearheading the future of our society.

I wish to place on record my deep appreciation to the Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Ms. Skelton, and to Ms. Kiladze, Deputy-Chairperson and the Committee's focal point for IPU affairs, for their assistance and determination to engage parliaments more systematically in the Committee's work.

I also wish to seize this opportunity to express my warm thanks to our longstanding partner in our fruitful journey to promote the rights of the child, UNICEF.

One year ago, we met to discuss avenues to mobilize parliaments to support children's rights. On the same occasion, we celebrated the joint statement that the IPU and the UN CRC had released in the lead-up to World Children's Day on the role of parliaments in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

As you will remember, this joint statement underscored the role that parliaments should play in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including through strong involvement in the State party reporting procedure.

The briefing we are having today is a natural follow-up to that initial discussion. It aims at providing you, members of parliaments and stakeholders, with in-depth information on the functioning of the UN CRC so as to facilitate the contribution of the parliaments to its work.

Over the last two decades, we have successfully mobilized the parliamentary community to support the work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review as well as the work of the CEDAW Committee which oversees implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. In light of the encouraging outcome of those efforts, which sparked parliaments' interest and increased their involvement in the UPR process, we wish to generate the same momentum with parliaments' involvement in the work of the CRC. The necessary collaboration between parliaments and the UN CRC should help to bridge this gap and trigger further progress.

Needless to say, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most ratified human rights convention and therefore enjoys near universal support. Nonetheless, achieving children's full enjoyment of their rights remains a challenge.

In the same vein, we all are aware that adequate resources are needed to achieve this noble goal. Public financing remains a critical engine to implement the provisions of the Convention as well as the recommendations formulated by the CRC at the end of the review of each national report.

At the IPU we take this necessity seriously and have mobilized the parliamentary community accordingly. A number of related workshops were organized during IPU Assemblies, in Nusa Dua in March 2022, in Kigali in October 2022 and most recently in Luanda in October 2023.

This briefing will provide you with the necessary tools – thanks to interventions from technical experts and from MPs highlighting their national experience – to mobilize adequate funding to support the promotion of the rights of the child.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank our partners, the CRC, UNICEF and parliamentarians, who have kindly accepted to address this briefing and share their experience and good practice.

For my part, please be reassured that the IPU stands ready to support any initiatives you identify to follow up on this briefing. I wish you every success.

I thank you for your attention.