



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Generation Equality Action Coalition 6: Second Annual Strategic Planning Meeting
Session on “Countering the gender pushback – a dialogue between Generation
Equality’s Action Coalition on Feminist Movements and Leadership (AC 6) and
International Geneva actors”

9 July 2024

Your Excellencies,
Fellow leaders,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I welcome you all to the IPU, the House of Parliaments!

It is an honour to address you today at this significant gathering of feminist leaders from across the globe. This meeting stands as a testament to the collective commitment to advancing gender equality and ensuring that women's voices, in all their diversity, are heard and valued in all spheres of decision-making.

Despite progress in institutionalizing women's rights worldwide, we are now experiencing a rollback on so many fronts – in discourses, in acts and even in laws that are supposed to recognize and guarantee these rights. Against this backdrop, we are here to reaffirm that Women's Rights are Human Rights and to energize the potential of our collective leadership in order to push for substantial change sooner rather than later.

Old and new challenges become more pressing with an even bigger need for collaborative action. At the same time, a feeling of disconnect with governance institutions poses a major challenge to democracy. With institutions that seem unrepresentative of the diversity of populations, this raises an issue of legitimacy and efficiency.

Aiming for 50/50 parity in parliaments and across the board is a prerequisite for reviving our democracies, repurposing our institutions and addressing common challenges in a united, participatory and inclusive way. Parity defines effective leadership, a central piece for good governance and sustainable development. It is the only way to mainstream gender-responsive policies and put an end to policy stalemates that got us in an unsustainable trajectory in the first place.

In this context, elections present a critical opportunity to advance gender equality. It is only when voters demand gender equality that leaders feel bound to advance it. It is only when we have parity in numbers and power that we will have genuinely feminist policies.

In our fight for change, parity is the first step but not the end goal. We need a determined and feminist leadership that approaches equality comprehensively, that empowers and engages women and feminist activists in all their diversity, and that creates a favourable environment for them to lead in all areas of life.

In particular, we must address gender-based violence against women and girls who are active in the public domain not only as a human rights issue but also as a democratic deficit.

Also, ensuring that the voices of new generations are not only heard but substantially reflected in policymaking is essential in reconnecting societies and bridging the generational gap with trust. Encouraging and supporting young women in particular to take up leadership roles is not only beneficial for gender equality but also for the overall dynamism and responsiveness of political institutions.

Dear leaders,

Change must be collaborative, and our work must transcend traditional boundaries. Close collaboration of state institutions with civil society organizations, male champions, political, religious, and local community leaders is an imperative. Strong women's movements are also key to ensuring gains in women's rights are achieved and sustained. So, they must be meaningfully supported and have their voices heard.

It is only through our alliances that we can dismantle stereotypes, shape public opinion and foster environments where progressive policies can thrive. Our own experience in working with MPs on the ground has shown that change is most effective when it is locally driven and supported by a broad coalition of stakeholders. Experience also shows that multilateral institutions have a key role to play in supporting progressive local actors.

The ongoing situation in the Gambia regarding the safeguarding of the total ban of female genital mutilation is a clear indication that no success is final. The mobilization of our Action Coalitions is key.

Once again, welcome to the House of Parliaments and I look forward to the outcome of this session's deliberations!

Thank you.