



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Tenth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians

Yerevan, 12 September 2024

H.E. Mr. Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia,
H.E. Mr. President of the National Assembly of Armenia,
Madam President of the IPU,
Mr. President of the IPU Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians,

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to be with you today for the tenth edition of the IPU's Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to the National Assembly of Armenia for hosting this Conference and for all the work done to ensure that it is not only a success, but a platform for change. I was here in Yerevan only a few months ago and have seen first-hand the National Assembly's strong commitment to inter-parliamentary cooperation. Thank you for your leadership.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is hard to imagine a more crucial time to meet, as so many young people, confronted with climate change, pandemics, wars and economic hardship, are losing hope for the future.

Although I am not young in age anymore, I am still young in my heart, and I know how the formative years of youth are vital. They shape the paths that young people will take. This is why education and employment are foundational pillars for young men and women everywhere. In principle, such pillars should not face any disruption. But, not long ago, the COVID-19 pandemic halted work and learning for many. Since then, additional crises such as wars and climate change have intensified and continue to challenge young people's access to schools and jobs.

This is very worrying, as education and employment are not just rights; they are lifelines. They are cornerstones upon which stable, prosperous and inclusive societies are built. Yet, as we approach the 2030 deadline for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, we are well behind. Only 1 in 6 countries are on track to meet the target for universal secondary education. 1 in 4 young people are not in education or training, with young women disproportionately affected. This lack of progress not only threatens the future of millions, but also undermines many other global efforts, such as reducing poverty and ensuring peace.

We need to do better — and I'm convinced we can! Here in Yerevan, we are coming together to contribute our quota to reverse these trends.

We also meet on the eve of International Day of Democracy, on 15 September. This milestone reminds us how critical youth empowerment is for democracy to thrive. I join Madam President of the IPU in applauding Armenia for having one of the world's youngest parliaments, with over 50% of

parliamentarians under 40 years of age, the highest percentage in the world! This is a strong testament to Armenia's commitment to a vibrant and inclusive democracy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In 2024, the IPU has focused on peace and security, emphasizing the role of parliaments in enhancing both human security – which looks at individual safety and well-being – and common security – which looks at broader peace between peoples and nations.

These two approaches – human and common security – are interconnected: when common security breaks down, human security often follows, especially when it comes to education and employment. Likewise, when human security is threatened, the potential for conflict increases. This is a vicious cycle. The good news is that: by providing education and employment to young people, we can turn this cycle into a virtuous one!

Let me reinforce Madam President's words a moment ago. For young people, school is about more than just the opportunity to learn to read, write and count. School means protection. It means a safe environment. And it means learning how to live in peace with our neighbours. Similarly, decent employment is central to social participation, offering independence, identity and dignity. Employment is also key to social and economic integration.

Through these, we can build more resilient societies that not only protect the rights of young people, but also pave the way for a more peaceful world in the future.

This is what the IPU is all about. This is what this Conference is all about. Let's work together to promote greater investment in education and employment services to enhance stability and better deliver to those affected by disruption, especially young people. Our guiding star must be to ensure that education and employment are delivered for all, at all times!

Let's also ensure access to education and employment for all and eliminate discriminatory barriers. Opportunity is not a privilege but a universal right!

Dear colleagues,

I have always been a strong believer in the power of youth at the IPU, and in the power of young parliamentarians to lead the way in crafting solutions. This is particularly true for education and employment, which affect young people above all. Let us use this Conference as a turning point – hosted by a Parliament that exemplifies youth power – to propel this vision. The IPU stands with you, ready to support your efforts. Thank you!