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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Opening Ceremony of the 12th Plenary Session of the International Parliament for
Tolerance and Peace (IPTP)

“Promotion of the Universal Peace Charter and the Search for Solutions for
Contemporary Global Challenges for Tolerance and Peace”

Geneva, 3 March 2025

Your Excellency Mr. Al-Jarwan,
Your Excellency, Mr. Epainete Djangrang Sende
Your Excellency, Mr. Mahmadohir Zokirzoda,
IPU Honorary President, Mr. Duarte Pacheco,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,

It is an honour for me to address the 12th Plenary Session of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace, and I would like to thank your Excellencies, Mr. Suos, President of the International Parliament for Tolerance and Peace, and Mr. Al-Jarwan, President of the Global Council for Tolerance and Peace, for this kind invitation.

If I may say, you have chosen an excellent city for a meeting on the Promotion of the Universal Peace Charter and the Search for Solutions for Contemporary Global Challenges for Tolerance and Peace – And not just because Geneva is the home of the IPU!

Geneva, historically, has been the city of tolerance and peace – the home of the International Committee for the Red Cross, the League of Nations, many UN bodies, the World Council of Churches, and many other civil society and international organisations focussing on creating a more equal, just and peaceful world.

So, welcome to Geneva, and may this spirit of multilateralism, dialogue and peacebuilding, which is imbued in its very fibre, inspire you.

While preparing my remarks for today, I reflected on your last meeting in Phnom Penh, which I was fortunate to attend, and where we discussed the quest for peace, reconciliation and tolerance.

There, I suggested that the two fundamental principles of human security and common security could inspire us in our efforts to promote peace and tolerance. A human security and common security approach is holistic, meaning that to achieve sustainable, positive peace, we must ensure that the fundamental needs and rights of all people are met, creating stable and harmonious communities that are resilient to conflict. We must also renew our commitment to multilateralism and partnerships that reduce tensions, build trust and bring mutual benefits to all nations. Finally, we must empower parliaments and civil society to work together to promote these principles, ensuring that peace efforts reflect and address the diverse challenges facing the world's citizens.

I would like to build on my remarks last year, in light of the fundamental principles expressed in the Universal Peace Charter, a highly impressive document, for which I congratulate you.

The principles expressed in the document are grounded in, broadly speaking, the upholding of international standards, respect for diversity, a shared commitment to peace and prosperity for all and

the importance of creating a culture of dialogue. These are precisely the same values that the IPU upholds and streamlines through all its work.

One of the IPU's "superpowers", if you will, is its ability to convene the global parliamentary community for dialogue. Twice a year we hold Assemblies, where our almost universal membership – currently at 181 national parliaments and growing, as well as Associate Members and Permanent Observers, including the IPTP – comes together to discuss how to uphold universal standards, advance the sustainable development goals, and work for more peaceful and inclusive societies.

These Assemblies live and breathe dialogue. There is a general debate, deliberations around standing committee resolutions, meetings of working groups and high-level advisory groups, workshops, panel discussions, an emergency item with a corresponding debate and social events as a more informal form of soft diplomacy. In addition to the main programme, and possibly more important: delegations independently organise bilateral meetings and the IPU often provides its good offices to assist with the peaceful resolution of disputes. All of this is grounded in dialogue based on respect, mutuality and shared commitments.

The outcome document of the March 2024 Assembly focussed, in fact, on the role of Parliamentary diplomacy as a tool for building bridges for peace and understanding. We have seen the need to cultivate different dialogue and conflict resolution skills amongst our membership. At our upcoming Assembly we will therefore have a dedicated Workshop on parliamentary diplomacy and mediation.

In between Assemblies we have many activities which reflect the Universal Peace Charter's principles, such as Science for Peace schools, bringing together MPs and parliamentary staff with experts to discuss how science can be harnessed to promote peace. In June this year we will hold the Second Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue in Rome, where the global parliamentary community will come together with religious actors and other experts to jointly discuss how to promote peace, inclusion and human rights. This Conference will build on key commitments of the Marrakesh Communiqué, the outcome document of the first Parliamentary Conference on Interfaith Dialogue in 2023. The Marrakesh Communiqué resonates well with your Global Charter.

Friends, I am delighted that parliamentary diplomacy is gaining momentum, that parliamentarians are standing up and speaking out more during these difficult times.

In the IPU you have an ally that looks in the same direction and has been providing a global platform for Parliamentarians since 1889.

My call for action remains the same as in Phnom Penh now is the time for us to empower parliaments and civil society to work together to promote human and common security, and create a world where dialogue, cooperation, and mutual respect pave the way toward a future characterised by peace, tolerance, justice and prosperity for all.

Thank you for your attention and I wish you every success in your deliberations.