



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

2025 Interregional Seminar on the Achievement of the SDGs for Parliaments of Developing Countries – Opening Speech

Beijing, 28 August 2025

Honourable Chairpersons,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, I am honoured to be with you today at this seventh edition of the Interregional Seminar on the Achievement of the SDGs for Parliaments of Developing Countries. I would like to express my deep appreciation to the National People's Congress of China (NPC), in particular Mr. Leji Zhao, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the NPC, for receiving us with such warm hospitality and for the precious collaboration we have built up over the years.

The Interregional Seminars, held annually since 2016, are a key reflection of the strong and enduring partnership between the NPC and the IPU to cooperate and engage on advancing the achievement of the SDGs at the national, regional, interregional and global levels. To date, these gatherings have mobilized around 300 parliamentarians from developing nations across Africa, the Middle East, the Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean, uniting them to take a common stance and advance cooperation on the SDGs.

As you know, sustainable development is a subject particularly important to the IPU. Our 2022-2026 Strategy is based on it – sustainable development is one of our four main policy areas. We are extremely grateful that the NPC has consistently contributed to the implementation of the IPU Strategy by providing financial support and collaboration to enhance our work with and for parliaments on sustainable development.

We highly value the contribution of all 181 of our Member Parliaments, but I must admit that the NPC sets a particularly high bar in terms of its contribution to our Organization. Already the largest contributor to our core budget, China has also made extensive voluntary contributions over many years to support the IPU's work on sustainable development and counterterrorism.

Just last month, Mr. Chairman announced a new donation agreement to support the IPU's work on sustainable development and climate change. We are profoundly grateful for this demonstration of the NPC's continued trust and support. It not only helps our Organization to properly assist Member Parliaments but also to position itself as the leading organization for parliamentary engagement with the SDGs.

Thanks to this financial support, we have been able to organize around 100 global, regional and national meetings on the SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. We have empowered parliaments and their members to strengthen their capacities and contribute to the development of their nations. We have developed knowledge products and created platforms allowing parliamentarians to exchange their knowledge and experience. We have worked to ensure that all United Nations Member States duly recognize the essential role that parliaments play in advancing the implementation of the SDGs.

In July, a new UN resolution on "Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union" was adopted. It outlines the continued commitment of the United Nations and national parliaments — through the IPU — to strengthen cooperation across a wide range of global issues, with the shared aim of advancing multilateralism, democracy, and sustainable development.

These extremely important topics were addressed again at the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, which the IPU organized later that same month, in close collaboration with the UN. This event was instrumental in reinforcing the parliamentary contribution to global governance and in motivating parliaments to unite around concrete actions for the well-being of people and the planet.

I would like to particularly refer to the High-Level Declaration that was adopted by Speakers of Parliament at the end of this event, as it is a substantive document that will certainly inform the IPU's new strategy.

It reaffirms our commitment to peace, justice and prosperity for all through stronger multilateralism, democratic governance, and parliamentary leadership. Through this Declaration, Speakers of Parliament recognized the urgent need to uphold international law, invest in inclusive and accountable institutions, and adopt people-centred economic models. They committed to revitalizing the SDGs, supporting UN-led reforms, and enhancing parliamentary oversight and diplomacy to shape a fairer and more secure future.

Progress on the SDGs has in fact stalled amid global crises, rising inequality, and weakened multilateral cooperation. With just five years remaining until 2030, only 17% of SDG targets are on track according to the latest UN report. Deepening crises — such as the lingering impacts of COVID-19, escalating conflicts, climate disruption, and geopolitical tensions — have driven 23 million more people into extreme poverty and pushed over 100 million into hunger compared to 2019, with 2023 marking the warmest year on record.

We stand at a crossroads. As you know, we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference of Women, which was held right here in Beijing. Its legacy is immense. The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action remains today our common roadmap to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women of girls, as reflected in SDG 5. Beyond being a specific development goal, gender equality is key to achieving the 2030 Sustainable Agenda as a whole. We cannot succeed economically, sustain peace or secure justice by excluding half of the world's population. So by fulfilling the promise of the Beijing Declaration we will bring development dividends to all.

There is no doubt that we have made progress since 1995. The proportion of women in parliaments has more than doubled in 30 years, from 11.3% to 27.2%. But this progress is slowing down, and in some parts of the globe we are moving backwards. Hard-won gains in women's rights are being reversed. The 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration should serve as an opportunity for parliaments to lead the way, consolidate legal guarantees for equality, eradicate harmful gender norms and practices, as well as gender-based violence, and set gender parity in governance as the norm. The IPU just launched a new campaign *Achieving gender equality: action by action*. We count on you to join this campaign and drive the change that we need in this area.

I welcome the inclusion of AI governance on the programme of this seminar. Artificial intelligence is a very important issue for the whole world, and IPU Member Parliaments are rightly playing close attention. Last month, at the Speakers' Conference, it was noted that no individual stakeholder could tackle adequately the challenges of AI governance.

Speakers emphasized that the UN Global Digital Compact, adopted in September 2024, demonstrated that international cooperation on digital governance was not just possible but essential, especially if the digital divide was to be closed holistically. It was also noted that digital transformation must be environmentally sustainable, with countries leveraging renewable energy for AI development to mitigate possible environmental harm.

The IPU is paying close attention to these questions. I take this opportunity to extend an invitation to you to participate in a parliamentary conference that we are co-organizing in Malaysia on 28-30 November this year, entitled *The role of parliament in shaping the future of responsible AI*.

We are very pleased that, through this seminar, further discussions will take place to promote an effective multilateralism that delivers an inclusive and sustainable development for all. Political will, inclusive policies, and stronger global partnerships are urgently needed to accelerate action and fulfil the promise of the 2030 Agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You have the power to enact positive changes.

As representatives of the people, and through your parliamentary responsibilities, you can help boost the change we want to see in the world. There are many actions you can promote, facilitate and implement.

Based on the IPU's extensive experience in this area, I would like to set out some concrete activities that you, as parliamentarians, could undertake to help develop sustainable and inclusive progress in your country, but also in your region and around the world:

- 1) **Advocate** for national development that pays equal attention to sustainable and inclusive economic growth, health and the well-being of all people and the planet. Ensure that policies, laws, strategies and budgets contribute to the achievement of the SDGs in an effective and coherent manner, with a rights-based and gender-responsive approach. If your Parliament has not yet established a mechanism or procedure to mainstream and deliver on the SDGs, advocate for this to be done.
- 2) **Align** your work and political agenda **with the SDGs. Build alliances** within your Parliament, with the executive branch and other relevant stakeholders. **Coordinate actions** and ensure they are aligned with international commitments.
- 3) Disaggregated data is extremely important to monitor the implementation of the SDGs, however its availability is still limited. **Request data from the national statistical office and help ensure that such offices are adequately funded.**
- 4) Help **implement the recommendations of the recently adopted High-Level Declaration of the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament** *A world in turmoil: Parliamentary cooperation and multilateralism for peace, justice and prosperity for all.*
- 5) **Consult citizens**, especially those that are underrepresented, marginalized and/or in vulnerable situations – to understand how things are progressing and if current strategies need to be adjusted. Involve them in the SDG implementation process. Inform the government if there is a need to correct actions.
- 6) Last but not least, **promote** campaigns that contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Regarding the **IPU campaign, Parliaments for the Planet** I invite you to encourage your colleagues to take action to reduce their carbon footprint by changing day-to-day behaviour, improving the energy efficiency of your Parliament, and reducing carbon emissions. As far as the IPU's latest campaign, **Achieving gender equality, action by action**, is concerned: I invite you to take a stand and promote laws and policies to enhance the participation and leadership of women in your Parliament, strengthen women's rights legislation and mandate gender responsive budgeting, as key pillars of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainable development is not just a global ambition — it begins with the choices we make at home. But for real, lasting impact, those choices must be echoed in our institutions. This gathering is more than an event; it is a powerful catalyst for action — an opportunity to deepen parliamentary dialogue, strengthen coordination, and build the partnerships necessary to turn commitment into progress.

The IPU stands ready to provide assistance in this area, if needed. Do not hesitate to request information from the IPU Secretariat and see how this support could be organized and tailored to your specific context.

Let this seminar be the beginning of renewed commitment and collective action. The road to sustainable development demands not only ambition, but unity, dialogue and courage. Together, we can turn shared vision into tangible progress — for our people, our planet, and future generations.

I wish you all fruitful and constructive discussions.