



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech for Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

27th Congress of the King Prajadhipok's Institute (KPI)
Keynote address on *'The Role of the IPU in Advancing Global Environmental Policy:
Parliamentary Responsibility for Sustainable Development'*

Bangkok, 7 November 2025

Your Excellency, WanMuhamadNoor Matha, President of the National Assembly and Speaker of the House of Representatives
Hon. Dr. Issara Sereewatthanawut, Secretary-General of the King Prajadhipok's Institute
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to join you today at this 27th Congress of the King Prajadhipok's Institute and to deliver this keynote address.

Let me at the outset express my heartfelt condolences to the King and people of the Kingdom of Thailand on the passing of the Queen Mother Sirikit. May her soul rest in peace.

I would like to express my appreciation to the KPI for bringing together such an impressive group of participants. It is incredibly fruitful to have parliamentarians, scholars, community leaders, and citizens together in the same room to discuss one of the defining challenges of our time: the environment. This is in line with the IPU's parliamentary ecosystem approach whereby parliament can only be efficient and effective when it works in co-operation with all segments of society. Parliaments do not exist in isolation but in a complex system in constant interaction with other institutions of government, beginning with the executive, as well as political parties, civil society organizations, constituents, the media, academia, and others.

I have been asked by the organizers to talk about the IPU's role in advancing Global Environmental Policy. In doing so, I use the opportunity to introduce the Organization I lead, which many of you may not be familiar with. The IPU was founded in 1889, that is a little over 136 years ago to serve as a forum for mobilizing parliaments in support of peace.

Today, the IPU is the global organization of national parliaments. We promote democratic governance, institutions and values, working with parliaments and parliamentarians to articulate and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people. We work for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, climate action and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action.

In all of its work, the IPU seeks to strengthen national parliaments' capacity to carry out their many important roles – from serving and representing diverse constituents, to acting to hold their governments accountable at home and abroad, to creating and resourcing legislation on a wide array of issues to ensure the well-being of their people now and in the future.

The IPU's work is predicated on the idea that strong and effective parliaments can safeguard fundamental human rights, ensure sustainable development that leaves no one behind, achieve gender equality, empower youth, create pathways for peace and security, and protect the planet. The IPU recognizes that parliaments are called upon to constantly evolve to better serve their constituents. They therefore need to be equipped with the best insights, ways of working, and resources that allow them to anticipate and solve problems and make decisions for the long-term interests of all their people.

Yet, as much as individually strong parliaments are instrumental to progress, they are not enough. The IPU is dedicated to bringing together 183 of the world's parliaments to work jointly on an equal footing. This global position allows it to: 1) accelerate progress, by connecting parliaments to each other for peer learning with mutual respect and support; 2) complement parliaments' experience with data and research; and 3) catalyse joint political action on critical global issues that affect the lives of all people everywhere.

It is this strategy that informs the IPU's efforts in the area we are concerned with today: environmental policy and singularly climate action, which if I may add, has been recognized by all 183 member parliaments of the IPU as the number one priority. In so doing, we are inspired by our vision for a world where every voice counts, where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development.

From the air we breathe to the food we eat and the water we drink, the health of our environment is inseparable from the health of our societies. Decisions made in parliaments today ripple far beyond legislative halls; they shape the livelihoods, security, and well-being of millions.

This gathering is also a powerful reminder that democratic institutions are not abstract structures, but rather living spaces where societies negotiate their future. And there is perhaps no issue today that will define the future more than how we respond to the environmental crisis. The choices we make now will shape the world not just for the next political cycle, but for generations to come.

The theme of this Congress, environmental democracy and diplomacy, could not be a more timely issue to discuss. Environmental degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are not abstract threats. They are lived realities that are affecting people's health, livelihoods and security across the globe as we speak. These challenges do not respect national borders. Indeed, as former UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon once said, climate change has no passport.

These transboundary problems therefore require transboundary solutions.

As you will have understood from what I said a while ago, environmental democracy and diplomacy also speak directly to the heart of what the Inter-Parliamentary Union stands for: cooperation among the world's parliaments, the strengthening of democracy, and the advancement of sustainable development.

And when we talk about environmental democracy, we are not only talking about environmental policy. We are also talking about environmental justice. It is about ensuring that everyone has a voice, that benefits and burdens are shared fairly, and that no individual or community is left marginalized or overlooked in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.

As we gather here today, we do so at a moment when the consequences of environmental decline are becoming increasingly visible and increasingly costly. Droughts are expanding and becoming longer. Floods are becoming more frequent and more devastating in their wake. Heatwaves are breaking records year after year. Entire ecosystems are collapsing, and with them, the ways of life of millions of people. What was once predicted is now observable fact. The climate and environmental crises are not crises of the future. They are already unfolding before our eyes.

And yet, despite the gravity of the situation, we also stand at a moment of possibility and opportunity. The decisions made in the coming years, especially at the level of parliaments, will determine whether we remain on a path of environmental destruction or chart a new course toward resilience, responsibility and shared prosperity.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the great progress we, as the global community, have achieved on environment, climate and sustainable development agreements. From the Sustainable Development Goals, to the Paris Agreement, to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, we can applaud these achievements. However, implementation remains a critical gap.

And that is why the role of parliaments, and of the IPU as the global organization of national parliaments, is so critical. Parliaments are where commitments become reality. Parliaments are where international agreements are translated into national laws, budgets, and oversight mechanisms. Without parliaments, there can be no implementation, and without implementation, even the most important international agreements remain only words on paper.

Too often, we celebrate treaties and agreements at the moment of signing, but we fail to build the machinery required to turn aspiration into action. In short, accountability is not adequately built into these treaties. Oftentimes, legislation lags behind commitments, budgets do not match ambitions, and oversight mechanisms are weak. Parliaments are uniquely positioned to close this gap. They can and must ensure that promises made at international tables result in real-world improvements for citizens, communities, and the environment.

Because the truth is: no global environmental goal can be achieved without national legislation, national budgets, and national accountability frameworks. And these are all, without exception, at the core of the work of parliaments. I am cognisant of the fact that I am addressing here an audience that includes parliamentarians. However, I thought I should drive home this point in the hope of stimulating more awareness and spurring action by these representatives of the people.

At the IPU, we work with our 183 Member Parliaments to help make sure real, sustainable progress is made on addressing the world's most pressing environmental issues.

There is no gainsaying that climate change represents a global existential threat. Given the urgency, the IPU's Members have stressed the need for the IPU to take urgent action to contribute to global efforts to restore the planet's ecological health. To uphold the multilateral consensus and accelerate the green transition globally, the IPU is helping parliaments make progress on and increase accountability for the Paris Agreement and advance other climate-relevant treaties, accelerate decarbonization and reduce the carbon footprint within parliaments themselves.

The IPU is also endeavouring to reduce its own carbon footprint in its annual activities as an organization, including its Assemblies. The ultimate goal of the IPU's action on climate change is to allow all people to live on a healthier planet with warming limited to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

So, how, in practical terms are we following through with this?

Firstly, the IPU raises political awareness. Through our biannual assemblies, regional seminars, and political gatherings at high-level fora, including the United Nations Climate Change Conferences, we bring together the global parliamentary community to exchange good practices, build networks, and generate collective political will to act. These gatherings allow parliamentarians to see solutions in action. By providing a platform for parliaments to come together to debate, reflect on, and identify common solutions, the seeds for a more connected and more collaborative world are sown, and the pathways for meaningful, coordinated action become clearer.

I have just come from Qatar, which has been hosting the Second World Summit for Social Development. The IPU and the Parliament of Qatar jointly organised a Parliamentary Forum at this summit to bring a parliamentary perspective to the deliberations of the summit on pathways to address social development through parliaments' legislative, budgetary and oversight functions. This week, parliamentarians are headed to Belem for COP 30 in the same spirit. The IPU has been convening a parliamentary forum at the COP for over a decade now. Such fora are an opportunity for parliamentarians to chart the course for shared parliamentary solutions to pressing climate issues. In December 2015 in Paris, the IPU adopted the Action Plan on Climate Action, which is meant to be the parliamentary mirror of the Paris Agreement.

The message is clear: there should be no global conversation, or even regional conversation, without the voice of the people's representatives being heard. The IPU is dedicated to mobilising parliaments and making sure their voice is heard, that the real aspirations of the people are woven into the outcomes of these global gatherings.

Second, the IPU provides tools and guidance to national parliaments in a tailored way, and in a way that is truly driven by the needs of parliament. We connect parliaments with the world's leading environmental and climate experts, ensuring that legislators have access to the latest scientific knowledge and best practices. By equipping parliaments with this information, we enable them to make informed decisions, draft effective legislation, and oversee implementation with confidence.

The IPU also regularly produces environmental guidance documents specifically designed for parliamentarians, translating complex international recommendations into practical tools that can be applied within national contexts. This ensures that global standards are understood, adapted, and actionable for every parliament, regardless of size or resources.

The IPU and the London School of Economics have established a data base of climate-related legislation and policies. This database which contains about 5000 pieces of legislation and policies, is intended to be a resource for parliaments wishing to design such legislation and policies.

Furthermore, the IPU has launched a series of videos on key climate topics to help parliaments around the world make progress on climate action. Topics cover climate science, global climate governance, climate and the private sector, climate just transitions and climate action tools.

Third, we promote accountability. Through the IPU's self-assessment toolkit for parliaments on the SDGs, we encourage parliaments to measure how effectively they are supporting sustainable development, including environmental sustainability. Furthermore, through the IPU's Parliaments for the Planet campaign, parliaments are encouraged to track their emissions and monitor their progress on achieving environmental sustainability. We believe that change begins at home, and that leading by example sends a powerful signal to citizens: when parliament takes responsibility, it inspires society to follow.

If you allow me, I will say a few words about this Campaign:

This campaign is intended to mobilize parliaments and parliamentarians to accelerate action on the climate emergency. It is designed to spur parliaments and parliamentarians to use their power to create change in parliament and pressure government to commit to stronger climate action. I encourage those of you who have not done so to download the toolkit for the Campaign at <https://www.ipu.org/parliaments-planet> and to sign up to the campaign.

Indeed, when parliaments measure their own carbon footprint, when they adopt green procurement policies, when they modernize buildings or reduce paper waste, they are not just setting an example, they are demonstrating their commitment to act. They are showing citizens that environmental leadership is not something they ask of society, but something they also embody themselves. At the IPU, we believe that every parliament, no matter its size, can be equipped to lead.

And equipping parliaments to lead goes beyond shaping domestic policy. It also strengthens their ability to engage in international cooperation while upholding the principles of inclusion and accountability. In this way, environmental diplomacy and environmental democracy are deeply connected to the support the IPU provides to parliaments around the world.

Environmental diplomacy requires parliaments to think beyond borders. It calls for cooperation on shared resources such as rivers, forests, and air. In Southeast Asia, this is especially relevant. The Mekong River, for example, is not just a lifeline for one nation, but for millions across the region. Parliamentarians

can and must play a key role in ensuring that such shared ecosystems and vital resources are managed sustainably and fairly so all nations can benefit, while also jointly contributing to their preservation.

Allow me to dwell a bit on environmental democracy. I use the opportunity to commend Thailand on enshrining environmental democracy in its national strategy plan for 2018-2037.

In my view, environmental democracy must ensure that all voices, including those of the poor, of ethnic minorities, of women, youth and the elderly, are heard in environmental decision-making. Parliaments, as the mirror of society, have the duty to open their doors to those voices, to legislate for access to information, and to protect the right of citizens to participate in legislative processes. Democracy itself can be seen as a tool for environmental resilience. When citizens trust their institutions and can take part in shaping environmental policy, the outcomes are more just, more sustainable, and more impactful. For parliaments to be deserving of that trust and thus live up to the values of democracy, they should be representative and therefore inclusive, they should be transparent and accountable to the people.

Environmental democracy also demands honesty. It demands that policies must reflect scientific reality, that public participation must be meaningful, and that long-term interests must not be sacrificed for short-term gain. In many parts of the world, citizens are more informed, more engaged, and more demanding than ever before. Rather than viewing this heightened awareness and scrutiny as a challenge, parliaments should see it as a source of strength. It can be seen as an opportunity to build policies that are resilient, inclusive, widely supported and therefore more legitimate. When citizens are actively involved, and when their concerns are genuinely considered, policies become stronger, implementation becomes more effective, and trust in democratic institutions is reinforced. In this sense, an engaged public is not a threat to parliamentary work; it is the very foundation on which enduring environmental progress is built. Again, this is consistent with the IPU's parliamentary ecosystem approach which I referred to earlier in this speech.

The IPU stands ready to continue empowering parliaments to become engines of good environmental governance and sustainable development. Through capacity building and inter-parliamentary dialogue the IPU is available to accompany parliaments on their journey to becoming environmental leaders. And we see this happening already in many countries around the globe – including right here in Thailand where important legislation on climate change and clean air has been actively and thoughtfully debated.

But we also know that environmental democracy is not only about passing laws. It is about ensuring that laws are monitored, evaluated, and constantly improved. It is about public participation, access to justice, and transparency. It is about creating environmental policies that do not just work on paper but work for people, especially those most at risk from the damaging impacts of climate change and environmental degradation.

Ladies and gentlemen, let us remember: protecting the environment is not a matter for the future. It is a responsibility of the current generation. Each law that parliaments pass, each budget that parliaments approve can either bring us closer to sustainability or push us further from it. The task is to ensure that parliaments everywhere are on the right side of that choice.

The challenges we face in protecting our planet are vast and complex. Yet our capacity to respond, especially when we respond collectively, is even greater. Each law passed, each budget approved, and each oversight review undertaken can bring us closer to a sustainable future. Parliamentarians have the power to turn ambition into action, and to leave a legacy of resilience for future generations. Let us rise to that responsibility together, here in Thailand, across Southeast Asia, and around the world, ensuring that democracy, cooperation, and sustainability walk hand in hand.

As the IPU celebrates over 135 years of bringing parliaments together for peace, democracy, and development, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting your parliament, and all parliaments around the world, in shaping a greener, fairer, and more sustainable future. In so doing, the IPU should and is

walking the talk. It is greening its processes, reducing its carbon footprint and pursuing a progressive sustainability policy.

Thank you.