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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Workshop on SDG-informed legislative scrutiny: Focus on SRHR and climate change

Organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Parliament of Lesotho,
in collaboration with the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary
Forum (SADC PF)

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Honourable Speaker,
Madam Secretary General of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum,
Honourable Members of Parliament,
Distinguished Partners and Guests,

It is a great pleasure to address you at the opening of this important workshop on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Let me begin by sincerely thanking the Parliament of Lesotho for its leadership in recognizing that advancing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals requires effectively addressing their interlinkages, such as the critical nexus between climate change and sexual and reproductive health and rights. In the face of current challenges to global cooperation, your determination to continue pushing forward the global agenda is both timely and commendable, positioning you as leaders of change for your people and reflecting exactly what the SDGs were designed to achieve.

Climate change is a global reality, but its impacts on the ground are deeply unequal. In Lesotho and across Southern Africa, increasingly frequent droughts, erratic rainfall, and extreme weather events are undermining livelihoods, deepening poverty, and exacerbating existing inequalities. Beyond its visible environmental and economic impacts and being a driver of food insecurity and climate-induced migration, women, adolescents, and populations in marginalized situations are facing new and compounded vulnerabilities due to the climate crisis. These include disrupted access to essential services such as maternal health care and family planning, as well as heightened risks of gender-based violence and harmful practices. These realities remind us that climate change is not only an environmental issue, it is also a human rights and development challenge.

Integrating climate action with sexual and reproductive health and rights is therefore critical to building resilience, addressing inequalities, and promoting inclusive socio-economic development that leaves no one behind.

The SDGs offer a comprehensive and unifying framework to guide this work, ensuring that national policies and laws drive progress toward a shared vision of sustainability, equity, and well-being. In this context, I am particularly pleased that you will truly “walk the talk” by being the first to use the IPU toolkit on SDG-informed legislative scrutiny. This is a powerful instrument that was designed to help parliaments strengthen new and existing legislation to ensure it can effectively support the achievement of the SDGs.

I would like to commend all of you for breaking new ground and setting an example for other parliaments to follow. The IPU stands ready to continue supporting the Parliament of Lesotho in this important journey toward a stronger future for all.

I wish you a productive and fruitful workshop. Thank you.