



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

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Panel on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action

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Your Excellency, President of the Human Rights Council,
Madam Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Nada Al Nashif,
Excellencies,
Fellow Panellists,
Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour to address you on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at this timely discussion on revitalizing support for the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA).

Before turning to the relevance of this topic for the IPU and national parliaments, allow me a personal note. The fight against discrimination and the promotion of inclusive societies are not abstract principles. They are central to the credibility and integrity of our institutions. They also have a personal resonance for me.

The DDPA was never intended as a time-bound response to a passing challenge. Its relevance today is undeniable. Around the world, we are witnessing a resurgence of nativist rhetoric, persistent racial inequalities, the amplification of hate speech online, and growing mistrust between communities. The manifestations may evolve, but the underlying challenge remains.

The DDPA explicitly recognizes the role of parliaments and of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. That recognition was prescient. If international commitments are to translate into real change, they must pass through parliaments.

Allow me to highlight four areas where parliamentarians are indispensable.

First, legislation. Parliaments transform international commitments into binding national law. This includes enacting comprehensive anti-discrimination frameworks, criminalizing incitement to racial hatred, and addressing structural inequalities in education, employment and access to justice. Yet many parliamentarians encounter resistance when challenging entrenched interests or discriminatory narratives. Just this month, I launched an IPU report showing that 71% of MPs experience intimidation from the public. Such pressure is often compounded when parliamentarians themselves face intersecting forms of discrimination or take action on sensitive issues such as racism. Moving from rhetoric to reform requires political courage.

Second, oversight. Laws alone are insufficient. Parliaments must hold governments accountable for implementing anti-racism policies effectively and equitably. This means scrutinizing budgets, insisting on disaggregated data, and ensuring that national human rights institutions are adequately resourced.

Third, representation. Inclusive institutions strengthen public trust. When parliaments reflect the diversity of the societies they serve—across race, ethnicity, religion, gender and age—they are better positioned to craft responsive and legitimate policies. The IPU continues to monitor and support progress toward more representative and inclusive parliaments worldwide.

Fourth, leadership in public discourse. Parliamentarians shape national narratives. At a time when racism and xenophobia can spread virally online, elected officials have a particular responsibility to reject

incitement, model respectful and fact-based debate, and show solidarity with those targeted by intimidation or stigma—even when they belong to opposing political camps. This commitment was reaffirmed in the 2023 Manama Declaration adopted by our Member Parliaments, which underscored the importance of peaceful coexistence, tolerance and inclusive societies.

While the IPU does not have a standalone programme dedicated to the Durban process, combating discrimination is firmly embedded in our current Strategy. Through our human rights work, including the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, our capacity-building initiatives, and our policy guidance, we support parliaments in addressing racism and related intolerance in practical and concrete ways.

Credibility begins at home. Leading by example is integral to our commitment to the values we promote. That is why the IPU's current strategy lays strong emphasis on representative and inclusive parliaments, including for groups that have historically been marginalized.

Excellencies,

The DDPA reminds us that combating racism requires coordinated efforts—by governments, parliaments, civil society, the private sector and international organizations. Parliaments occupy a central place in this ecosystem. They bridge global norms and local realities.

To galvanize public support, we must demonstrate that progress is possible—that laws can improve lives, that inclusive politics can reduce tensions, and that unity in diversity is a source of strength rather than division.

The IPU stands ready to continue its collaboration with this Council and all partners to ensure that the promise of Durban remains alive and meaningful.

Thank you.