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# Speech for Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

152nd IPU Assembly  
55th Session of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

Istanbul, 15 April 2026

Madam President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians,  
Madam President of the IPU,  
Dear members of the Bureau,  
Dear friends,

Thank you for your generous words.

I receive them with humility and with sincere appreciation.

I also receive them with a clear awareness that whatever progress the IPU has made on gender equality is, first and foremost, the result of collective work. It is the product of sustained effort by women parliamentarians, by supportive men, by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, and by this Bureau, whose leadership has helped give direction, continuity and substance to that work.

That is why it is especially meaningful for me to be with you today.

Over the years, the Bureau has helped galvanize direction, sustain momentum, and translate commitments and vision into lasting institutional change.

It has kept gender equality at the centre of the organization's attention with consistency and purpose. And it has reminded the IPU, time and again, that real change requires institutions to be ready to reform and to hold the course despite upheaval and pushback.

In that sense, this Bureau has been a powerful force for transformation both within the IPU and beyond it.

It has shaped debates, informed decisions and strengthened accountability. It has helped build the conditions in which parity could become part of the institutional backbone of the organization. It has helped the IPU take a crystal-clear and firm stand against harassment, intimidation and other forms of violence. It has made clear that gender equality must be reflected not only in our words, but also in our leadership, our governance and our standards.

That is also why I see this Bureau as a place where experience is brought into policy, where leadership is strengthened, and where women parliamentarians find continuity, solidarity and strategic direction.

That mission must continue.

Progress in gender equality is never self-sustaining. Gains have to be protected, reinforced and deepened. If we are serious about the future, we also have to be serious about the fact that gender equality must be co-created across society, including with the women who have too often been excluded from these spaces. Those whose exclusion is shaped not only by gender, but also by indigeneity, age, disability, ethnicity, social status or geography.

To my mind, that is one of the next frontiers of this work.

I have always believed that gender equality is a societal issue. It concerns both women and men. It shapes the quality of democracy. It contributes to the legitimacy of institutions. It ensures the fairness of public life.

I did not come to that conviction late. I was fortunate to be raised in a feminist environment where the strength, dignity and authority of women were part of everyday life.

At a time when there is organized backlash against women's rights and against the very language of equality, what is needed is leadership that is committed to stay on the course.

That is why the work of this Bureau matters so much.

In my turn, I thank you for your trust, for your commitment, and for your leadership.