



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

152nd IPU Assembly
Opening of the 41st Forum of Women Parliamentarians

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Mr. Speaker of the Grand National Assembly and President of the 152nd IPU Assembly,
Madam President of the IPU,
Madam President of the 41st session of the Forum of women Parliamentarians,
Madam President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians,
Distinguished members and guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your generous words.

I receive them with humility and with deep appreciation.

I do so with a clear awareness that the progress reflected today is not the work of one person. It is the result of sustained commitment by women parliamentarians, by supportive men, by the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, by the Forum itself, and by all those across our membership who understood that gender equality is not peripheral to democracy, but intrinsic to it.

If there is one development of which I am particularly proud, it is the place that the Forum of Women Parliamentarians occupies within the IPU.

This Forum is one of the places where the Organization defines itself. It has helped transform parliaments from within. It has also helped redefine inter-parliamentary diplomacy itself. Today, serious parliamentary engagement at the international level cannot claim legitimacy if it does not integrate the rights, perspectives and leadership of women. In that regard, this Forum is a recognized point of reference.

This role is upheld by the Forum because women parliamentarians focus on substance over symbolism, on influence over superficiality, and on structural change over rhetorical commitment. This leads our Organization to embed gender equality in how we govern, in how we measure progress, and in how we exercise leadership.

We took the view that inequality should not be without consequence. Restricting the voting rights of single-sex delegations affirms a simple but important principle: representation matters, and exclusion cannot be normalized within an organization committed to democracy.

We also worked to ensure that parity would become part of the institutional backbone of the IPU. Today, the share of women in the Executive Committee stands at 50 per cent. Three out of four presiding officers of Standing Committees are women. These figures show progress to be sustained.

We have also strengthened the institutional environment through measures to address harassment and protect dignity. Today all participants in our assemblies, meetings and events are protected.

We have supported more initiatives led by women parliamentarians, including the Global Conference of Women Parliamentarians. The fact that its first major outcome, the Plan of Action on Parity, was endorsed by the Governing Council is a sign that this Organization translates advocacy into policy, and policy into direction.

I am also proud of the investment the IPU has made in evidence. Our data on women in parliament and on sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament have become recognized global reference points. They have strengthened knowledge and accountability.

I truly believe that the work ahead must be approached with realism and resolve.

Success is not final. In gender equality, progress is never self-sustaining. It requires vigilance, constant advancement, institutional discipline and political courage. We know that there is pushback. We know that it is organized. We know that rights once secured can be questioned again. That is why we must remain equally vigilant, equally organized, equally determined and equally clear about what is at stake.

As I look to the future, my hope is that the IPU will continue to evolve as a model for gender-sensitive parliaments and gender-sensitive institutions more broadly.

This future also requires that men continue to see themselves in this effort, not as observers, but as allies and co-creators in changing norms, institutions and expectations. I have always believed that gender equality is not a women's issue. It is a societal issue. For that reason, it cannot be built in isolation. It requires co-creation.

So, I receive the tributes expressed today not as a conclusion, but as an encouragement to continue supporting and growing this Forum.

Thank you.