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# Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General Chair of the IGC Global Board

Biannual meeting of the Geneva Gender Champions

Geneva, 11 June 2026

Excellencies,  
Colleagues,  
Fellow Gender Champions,

I would like to begin by thanking Her Excellency Ambassador Deike Potzel for hosting this summer's meeting and creating a space for us to discuss how we can all collectively advance gender equality in artificial intelligence across International Geneva.

I am very pleased to speak to you today for the last time as Chair of the IGC Global Board. In the six years since I became Chair, we have accomplished a great deal.

Over the years, the IGC has been bringing together Ambassadors, Heads of International Organizations, and Civil Society Leaders to mainstream gender equality across the multilateral system.

We know many challenges lie ahead. And much more remains to be done. But I have been particularly heartened by the time dedicated to this cause by so many leaders who continued to champion gender equality in times of pushback on both women's rights and on our multilateral institutions.

From the Geneva Pledge for Gender-Responsive Climate Action which has now been signed by 87 active Champions and alumni, to the second edition of the Gender-Responsive Assemblies Toolkit which featured contributions from 17 different organizations, the IGC has continued to deliver on its core mission of driving change through collective action.

At the IPU, the world organization of parliaments that I have had to honour to lead for the past 12 years, we foster dialogue across our 183 member parliaments – including those that are in conflict. In this same vein, I have always promoted an IGC that is inclusive of all. I am a true believer in the value of bringing to the table all those who have different, and often divergent perspectives. We must find common ground and advance together for the principles we cherish.

Gender equality is not optional. It's not a nice-to-have idea.

And there is a lot we have learned by doing in the IPU. I am proud to say that, as I leave office as Secretary General of the IPU, the organization has a woman President, a woman Vice-President and a woman Secretary General. Since last year, our Statutes and Rules have set gender parity in participation and governance as its ultimate goal. These are more than words. I am leaving an organization that now has parity in both its Secretariat and its top-decision making body, our Executive Committee. And our first woman Secretary General.

This is the result of decades-long efforts of changing practices and culture and embedding them in rules, so we don't rely just on the goodwill of the leader of the day.

This is what makes the IGC so valuable. We have also created a community of principles and commitment. We have been modelling behaviour. And we are emulating one another to always aim higher.

Since 2020, I have been proud to lead a network that continued to grow and expand. Since I assumed the role of Chair, 426 Gender Champions have joined our network, including 188 new Champions here in Geneva. During that time, Champions have made over 3,000 personal commitments to advance gender equality in their organizations and across their spheres of influence. The network has remained strong and robust and continues to demonstrate its capacity to mobilise new Champions every year to become changemakers.

That is why I know that this network will continue to succeed and bring our world closer to one in which gender equality is a reality for everyone. I know this because I am leaving the role of Chair of the Global Board in excellent hands. Tatiana Molcean has proven her leadership abilities throughout her work at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, and as the former Permanent Representative of Moldova here in Geneva, I know that she will bring to her Chairpersonship a keen understanding of the priorities and challenges that face many of us in our work.

I also know that she will be ably assisted in that work by IGC's first ever Vice-Chair: Ambassador Matthew Wilson of Barbados. He has served on the IGC's Global Board since 2023 and already proven himself to be a strong advocate for both the network and gender equality across Geneva.

I want to say a word about the Board at large, that has been a very solid rock throughout my tenure at Chair. We have had frank and open discussions. And we have been assisted by a very talented and committed Secretariat.

In these challenging times and amidst a pushback we are feeling across the world, it is more important now than ever for the Gender Champions to stay united in our mission. Our model of collaboration, of commitment, and of cross-sectoral outreach works—I know that in the years to come you and this network will continue to work to guarantee that panels are diverse and representative, gender-based violence is eliminated, and personal commitments for gender equality are delivered upon. In this way, we will all ensure that we make the spaces in which we work safer, more equitable, and more representative for the Champions who follow us.