



Union Interparlementaire

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Address by Mr. Martin CHUNGONG Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

**Geneva Peace Week
Creating Sustainable Peace by
Implementing the UN Sustainable
Development Goals**

Geneva, 10 November 2017

Moderator,
Excellencies,
Secretary General of Rotary International,
President of Conflict Dynamics International,
Senator Laura Rojas of Mexico,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The IPU is completely in agreement with the statement that peace is not just the absence of war - it is more about the absence of violence in general. Sustainable peace entails the equal participation of all citizens in public life. After all, it is the sum total of differences that creates a nation. State institutions, such as Parliament, must therefore be inclusive and representative. To achieve that, they must be made up of women and men who represent differences in terms of geography, ethnicity, age and religion, or who have different interests or political opinions. Parliamentary debate in the true sense of the term cannot exist without this diversity.

Equal representation leads to more participatory and representative political decisions, where everybody has a chance to have their say in a tolerant and harmonious society. Social justice and social cohesion, as well as access to resources, economic recovery and reconstruction, are factors that impact on everyone's ability to live a life of dignity. They are also crucial for sustainable peace. All of these aspects are addressed in one way or another in the work of the IPU. The Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted 20 years ago and the resolution on "*Sharing our diversity*" adopted to mark its 20th anniversary, are vibrant examples of this.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure you will agree with me that building and promoting lasting peace is a more effective strategy than trying to contain, manage or resolve conflict. Moreover, there can be no development without peace. Politically stable situations provide an environment that is conducive to sustainable development.

Both UN Security Council Resolution 2282 (April 2016) on Sustaining Peace and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development share a common vision for peaceful societies. These complementary global frameworks are mutually reinforcing and can be seen as the two sides of the same coin. Sustainable development leads to peaceful and inclusive societies while sustainable peace ensures a favourable environment for sustainable development. Effective implementation of the SDGs will not only prevent the outbreak of conflict but also lay the foundations for self-sustaining peace and development by significantly reducing all forms of violence.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the need for sustainable peace and includes it as a cross-cutting issue. SDG 16 specifically seeks to 'promote peaceful and inclusive societies...' but peace is contingent on a number of other different factors, including social justice and inclusion for all sectors of society. Indeed, the US Security Council resolution on sustaining peace addresses, among others, the need for eradicating poverty, promoting socioeconomic development, gender equality and national reconciliation and building full-fledged institutions with improved governance and more inclusive societies. This shows that the link between the two agendas is not only Goal 16 but all other targets among the 17 SDGs that are related to non-violence, justice, and inclusiveness.

Parliaments can thus play a key role in advancing both the SDGs and sustaining peace by adopting enabling legislation, including key budget laws. They are uniquely placed to hold governments to account for the effective implementation of the peace and development frameworks. In addition, Parliaments often guarantee inclusiveness through the representation of marginalized groups, including ethnic and religious groups, women and youth. They are increasingly involving civil society in their decision-making processes in order to build trust among the general public and ensure representation of a variety of needs.

To achieve the SDGs, an appropriate national legislative framework must be put in place. Parliamentarians will have to develop specific laws and review existing ones so as to translate the 2030 Agenda into a sound, implementable body of legislation. They will need to use their oversight powers to ensure that Governments implement those national laws, policies and strategic plans as efficiently and effectively as possible. And Governments should report to Parliaments about their progress on this issue. It is also of the utmost importance for Parliaments to maintain active dialogue with the public, both to find out about their priorities and to evaluate how far the SDGs are being implemented on the ground.

To assist parliaments in this endeavour, the IPU has developed a number of tools, including a self-assessment toolkit, to allow parliaments to assess to what extent they are fit for purpose to institutionalize the goals. Their level of "fitness" will guide the legislation they draft and adopt and the oversight they exercise through to 2030. The toolkit also allows parliaments to effectively mainstream the 2030 Agenda into their work. For example, it can help identify strategies, mechanisms and partnerships to deliver their work effectively.

The IPU also provides direct assistance to parliaments, as well as policy guidance to help parliaments identify the right approach to a specific sustainable development issue - be it health, gender equality, climate change or other issue on which parliament is directly involved. Several parliamentary workshops have been conducted already and more are in the pipeline.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you know, there is a great deal of upheaval in the world today. We are faced with challenges of global magnitude, such as terrorism, climate change, depletion of the planet's natural resources, demographic imbalances and continuing poverty. These challenges have an impact on peace, and will only be resolved sustainably through dialogue.

Against this backdrop, Parliaments have a crucial role to play in implementing nationally decisions that are taken internationally. The IPU was founded on the premise of dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict. It believes that the role of parliaments in building peace and conflict prevention -through dialogue and diplomacy- is crucial and that parliaments also contribute no less to restoring peace and fostering reconciliation in post-conflict situations.

The IPU stands ready to support its Members in contributing to long-lasting peace. The complex nature of new and emerging security threats requires a comprehensive and holistic approach at all stages of the conflict cycle. It is important that these new threats are met with innovative responses by state entities so that 'old' and 'new' responses are implemented with full transparency and accountability.

At the policy level, the outcome documents of the General Debates that take place during the IPU Assemblies are landmark policy statements. Last year's declaration on "*Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict: Parliaments as early responders*" formulated a number of recommendations for Parliaments to lead by example and make transparency, accountability and respect for the rule of law their guiding principles. In April of this year, parliamentarians, through the Dhaka communiqué on "*Redressing inequalities: Delivering on dignity and well-being for all*", pledged to citizens and to the international community their determination to leave no one behind.

Finally, last month, during the 137th Assembly, the parliamentary community committed to pursuing a global model of sustainable and peaceful diversity in order to effectively tackle intolerance, mistrust and violence by endorsing a declaration on "*Promoting cultural pluralism and peace through interfaith and inter-ethnic dialogue*". Through these declarations, Parliaments are showing their willingness to dialogue and to promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

The IPU also organizes events to raise awareness on peace and security issues, generate reflexion and discussion within parliament and help parliamentarians and parliaments strengthen their capacities and make an effective contribution to better security governance in order to achieve sustainable peace. In this framework, the IPU Standing Committee on Peace and International Security organized last month an expert hearing on "*Sustaining peace as a vehicle for achieving sustainable development*" prior to drafting a resolution on the issue that will be discussed and negotiated at the 138th IPU Assembly in Geneva in March 2018.

Several activities aimed at ensuring the promotion of dialogue and inclusiveness within Parliaments and helping them contribute to national reconciliation are taking place at the IPU. Other activities to help parliaments deal with threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) are being undertaken. They consist mainly of awareness-raising and exchange of experiences among parliamentarians, as well as the provision of technical assistance and tools to enhance the parliamentary contribution. In all activities, the human rights, the gender and the youth perspectives are to be taken into account.

In addition to formal structures, the IPU also offers its good offices and mediation (parliamentary diplomacy) to contribute to the settlement of internal or inter-State disputes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude, I would like to refer to a major initiative at the IPU that is illustrative of the nexus between sustainable peace and sustainable development. In the Middle East, we are successfully building consensus between the Israelis, Palestinians and other Arab States in the region on the need to transform water from an element of potential conflict into a reason for peaceful co-existence. This initiative contributes to the development of water resources and to the building of trust between the communities involved. You will agree that this is an innovative approach to advancing the peace process in the Middle East.

Peacebuilding and development are long-term, nationally-driven processes that focus on strengthening the attitudes, structures, and institutions associated with peace and development. In sum, all of these actions will amount to building the two things we all know are most needed to achieve the development and peace agendas: political will and leadership.

Thank you.