



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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## IPU Statement

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**President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians**

**62nd Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**  
**New York, 15 March 2018**

It is a great honour for me to take the floor on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). My name is Margaret Mensah-Williams and I am the Chairperson of the National Council of Namibia and the President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

On Tuesday, the IPU and UN Women held their annual parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the Commission on the Status of Women. At this 62<sup>nd</sup> session, our meeting was entitled: *Parliaments deliver for rural women and girls*.

Our debates centred on how parliaments can facilitate the participation of rural women and girls in decision-making and how policy making by parliaments can better deliver rights and empowerment for rural women and girls. We also explored strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change on rural women and girls.

Over 140 parliamentarians (116 women parliamentarians) from 42 countries participated in a very interactive and constructive meeting. I trust that it will strengthen our commitment to follow up in our respective countries on the decisions that have been taken at this session of the Commission.

Chair, allow me to highlight the main outcomes of the meeting:

1. We first took stock of the systemic barriers that rural women and girls face to realizing their rights, including as a result of poverty and exclusion but also as a result of the multidimensional discriminations that they continue to face both in law and practice.
2. We agreed that rural women and girls have diverse experiences, but face common challenges in both developing and developed countries. Laws and policies need to consider the diversity of rural women and the challenges faced by the most vulnerable among them, including indigenous women, women with disabilities, HIV or other diseases.

3. Real change will only come if we include fully rural women and girls in our sustainable development efforts. As parliamentarians, we must listen to rural women and girls, channelling and amplifying their voices in decision-making.

We agreed to use women's parliamentary caucuses, standing committees and other existing mechanisms in our parliaments to establish stronger bridges with rural women as well as with governments and grassroots movements.

We also agreed that it was paramount to reach out to rural women in their communities through both in-person meetings and through mobile technologies and greater access to Internet. It is equally important to facilitate rural women's access to political decision-making in their communities and at the national level.

4. We are committed to work for legislative frameworks that guarantee rights, justice and equality for rural women. Our aim as parliamentarians must be to repeal discriminatory laws, address legislative gaps and deal with plural legal systems that have a negative impact on women's rights, using the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against Women as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. We are committed to use our oversight power to ensure all laws and policies adopted deliver the intended results for rural women and girls and that they have adequate financial resources to be well implemented.

6. We agreed that it was critical that more women participate in political decision-making on climate change policy and inform national efforts.

7. Ending discrimination, achieving equality, and ensuring a sustainable future are not women's issues. They are matters of relevance for all of society. Men should be key allies in all efforts to promote the rights and empowerment of rural women and girls.

Let me end by highlighting the interest that many parliamentarians expressed in continuing to be involved in the work of the United Nations. They undertook to follow up on the conclusions of our meeting in their respective countries. We are convinced that, if each one of us plays our part, significant progress can be achieved.

Thank you.