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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(f) Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women

New York, 13 March 2018

1. The IPU and UN Women organized a one-day parliamentary event entitled *Parliaments deliver for rural women and girls*. The meeting took place on 13 March 2018 at UN Headquarters in New York on the occasion of the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).
2. The event brought together over 140 parliamentarians (116 women parliamentarians) from 42 countries, as well as government officials, representatives of international organizations and representatives of non-governmental organizations.
3. The meeting was opened by Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron, IPU President, and Ms. Purna Sen, Director of the Policy Division of UN Women. It was chaired by Ms. M. Mensah-Williams, President of the IPU Forum of Women Parliamentarians and Chairperson of the National Council of the Parliament of Namibia. Other speakers included members of parliament, Permanent Representatives to the United Nations, experts and representatives of international organizations.
4. The debates centred on how parliaments could facilitate the participation of rural women and girls in decision-making and how policymaking by parliaments can better deliver rights and empowerment for rural women and girls. Participants also explored strategies to mitigate the impact of climate change on rural women and girls.
5. The salient points of the debate were the following:
 - Rural women and girls face systemic barriers to realizing their rights, not only 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.
 - 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 and those living with HIV/AIDS or other diseases.
 - Parliamentarians must listen to, channel and amplify the voices of rural women and girls. They should promote mechanisms to guarantee the participation of rural women in decision-making at all levels. Women's parliamentary caucuses and other existing mechanisms in parliaments can be used to build bridges with rural women, as well as with governments and grass-roots movements.



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- Real change will come if rural women and girls are included in common efforts on sustainable rural development. Parliamentarians should meet rural women in their communities to hear their needs and recommendations, and seek to make communication channels available between rural areas and other parts of the country both through in-person meetings and through mobile technologies and greater access to the Internet. Rural development is crucial to secure food security and prevent migration that is too often brutal and inhumane.
- Legislative frameworks should guarantee that rural women can claim all their rights. The aim of parliamentarians must be to repeal discriminatory laws and address legislative gaps and plural legal system which deprive women of their real and substantive rights. To that end, there are key mechanisms through which the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) makes specific recommendations to States parties.
- Parliamentarians should use their oversight role to ensure that all laws and policies adopted have the effects intended and receive adequate financial resources to be truly implemented, including in rural areas. The use of tools like gender checklists and gender-responsive budgeting could be considered, in order to strengthen service delivery, responsiveness and accountability to rural women.
- The link between gender and climate change is important, and complex. Women and men do not experience climate change equally. Climate change policy must reflect that. It is critical that more women participate in political decision-making on climate change policy and inform the relevant national efforts.

6. The parliamentary meeting was webcast and can be viewed at: <http://webtv.un.org/search/first-session-parliaments-deliver-for-rural-women-and-girls-csw62-side-event/5750740910001/?term=&lan=english&page=8>. It received good coverage on social media.

7. In addition to the parliamentary meeting, the IPU also organized a series of side events on the occasion of the 62nd session of the CSW. The side events took place on 14 March and were all very well attended. The focus was on violence against women in politics; gender quotas and youth quotas; and gender equality in nationality laws.