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# Speech by Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

## Worldwide Environmental Education

Madrid, 6 December 2019

- As Mr. Iñigo Orvallanos just mentioned, **“The greatest transformations are only achieved through knowledge, awareness, and sense of collaboration”**.
- Ladies and gentlemen, I am privileged to have the chance to address this relevant issue as the President of the Parliamentary Union.
- In the Inter-Parliamentary Union **we have a strong commitment to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals and continuing with the Agenda 2030**. For those people who are not familiar with the IPU, let me explain you that it is the global organization of national parliaments; its main objective is working to mobilise parliamentarians in support of efforts to address global challenges.
- **All Parliaments in the world have the greatest opportunity to implement real change that will positively and significantly impact the future of the world and all humans**. It is a significant responsibility and one that we can't leave behind. Over the past two decades, **the IPU has contributed to more than 1,200 environmental laws and policies that exist nowadays**.
- The IPU is convinced that Environmental Education **is an essential part of every student's learning**. It helps to encourage awareness of the environment, leads to informed concern for active participation in resolving environmental problems, explores possible solutions, and lays the foundations for fully informed individuals in the protection of the environment and the rational use of natural resources.
- **Environmental education is a process that aims the development of environmentally citizens** who can compete in the global economy, who have the skills and knowledge to make well informed choices concerning the environment, and who exercise the rights and responsibilities of the members of a community.
- The education system of each country should incorporate certain aspects of the environment in school curricula. Like the example of India that since 1930 they have been doing it. **Environmental education must become a vehicle for engaging young minds in the observation of nature and understanding the patterns and processes in the natural and social worlds**; in order to take care of the habitat and its surroundings which

becomes a major part of EE in both primary and upper primary stages of school education. In the secondary and senior secondary stages, major issues such as environmental protection, management, and conservation are to be addressed in more detail.

- At the same time, **Parliaments have the responsibility to ensure that their constitutions are aligning with today's and tomorrow's biggest challenges**, such as climate change. Environmental knowledge contributes to an understanding and appreciation of the society, technology, and productivity and conservation of natural and cultural resources of their environment.
- **The IPU commits to push "World Environmental Education Initiative"**, to ensure all Parliaments to review their constitutions towards mandatory environmental education. And expresses joint efforts to draft a Global Educational Environmental Agreement (GEEA) to be signed at COP 26.
- As a parliamentarian, **I'm convinced that Environmental Education can solve the societal needs**, the needs of a community problem, and their solutions and workforce for tackling cooperative minds. That is why the role the parliaments have in implementing this initiative is so relevant: making laws; voting the budgets; holding our governments account to ensure we are going in the right direction; but most of all, we represent the people and it is our duty to work for future generations.
- Parliaments are the local entry point for global agreements. **As Mexican, I'm very proud that this year, 2019, Mexico incorporated environmental education in the 3rd article of the constitution as mandatory in all classrooms at all school levels.**

**The IPU will be working closely with parliamentarians to agree on common policies**, such as the duty of maintaining, protecting, and improving the quality of the environment, as a contribution to the protection of human health and safeguarding the ecological balance