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Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Genève – Suisse
www.ipu.org

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

Fifth IRENA Legislators Forum
Engaging Communities in the Energy Transformation:
Adoption of National Policies

Abu Dhabi, 10 January 2020

Your Excellency the Honorable Minister Dr. Thani Al Zeyoudi,
Mr. Director-General Francesco La Camera,
Distinguished Speakers and Members of Parliaments,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to thank the organizers of this important meeting, Your Excellency Dr. Thani Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment of the United Arab Emirates, because with your presence here you are supporting this difficult endeavor of renewables and energy transformation, and sending a strong message of your country's commitment to set the pathway for future generations.

Thank you also to Director-General Mr. Francesco La Camera, for inviting the Inter-Parliamentary Union to its work and deliberations. You have fully understood the problem, which is urgent and demanding, and you have included law makers in the discussion. Thank you for leading this way too, for hosting this pertinent gathering of authorities, with a global forum for cooperation and information exchange on renewable energy, for facilitating a responsible development of our energetic resources.

And, last but not least, many thanks to the Federal National Council (FNC) of the United Arab Emirates, in particular Mr. Speaker, Mr. Saqr Ghobash.

It is an honor for me to address you as the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the global organization of Parliaments.

It is a pleasure to see that, once again, IRENA is acknowledging the important role of legislators in this forum, with a full day dedicated to discussing and developing proposals on how to scale up energy transformation. From the IPU perspective, I can assure you that many Parliamentarians are committed to fostering sustainable growth, as a representation of what their societies are requiring from us.

My participation in this event represents the continuation of a strong partnership, both between the FNC and the IPU, and between IRENA and the IPU.

The FNC and IRENA have on numerous occasions supported the IPU's work, in particular through the IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development.

Mobilization of parliaments around the world to implement the SDGs and the Paris Agreement is a priority for the IPU. I am confident that the partnership between the IPU and IRENA will continue to yield many good results in this critical time as the world transforms its social, economic and environmental development and prepares to eradicate poverty once and for all.

2019 was a year where we witnessed, again, a number of misuses of energy resources, sometimes as part of violent conflict. Not only is war evolving into aspects of cyber warfare, but energy still remains a threat to the decent livelihood of many citizens around the world.

But 2019 was also a year of numerous progresses towards energetic efficiency.

At the **141st IPU Assembly in October 2019**, IPU Members unanimously adopted a resolution on *Addressing climate change*. Therein, they call on all parliamentarians to work with their governments in partnership with all stakeholders to implement the Paris Agreement by moving towards rapid implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Moreover, at the **140th Assembly in April 2019**, IPU Members unanimously adopted a resolution on *The role of fair and free trade and investment in achieving the SDGs, especially regarding economic equality, sustainable infrastructure, industrialization and innovation*, in which they invite parliaments, in light of the transformation of economies and the achievement of the SDGs, to focus on infrastructure development encompassing transportation, ICT and energy, particularly renewable energy.

Yet, especially with regard to transforming the global energy system, much remains to be done. A recent **UN Environment Programme Emissions Gap Report** states that the energy sector will be essential in the enhanced global mitigation efforts required to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. To illustrate the scale of the challenge, coal-fired power plants were the single largest contributor to emissions growth in 2018, an increase of 2.9 per cent compared with the previous year and surpassing annual total emissions of 10 gigatons of CO₂. The report warns that the transformation will be challenged by the fact that demand for energy services will grow 30 per cent by 2040, and that the current global energy system is still highly carbon intensive with coal, oil and natural gas meeting 85 per cent of all energy needs. If the necessary transition does not occur, greenhouse gas emissions will continue to increase year-on-year.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

In light of this, urgent action is needed now. But what can parliaments and parliamentarians do?

Parliaments have a vital role to play in **fostering international cooperation** to tackle climate change and its related challenges, including the transformation of the global energy system. It is these and other issues which jeopardize the implementation of the climate change commitments contained in the Paris Agreement and the achievement of the SDGs.

Parliamentarians should maximize their **legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions**. They must build national ownership, transform international agendas into national laws, policies, and action plans, and hold governments accountable over their actions, or lack thereof. In order to do so, they should enhance their knowledge and strengthen partnerships, including the private sector, to share information and best practice experiences on a regional and global scale.

Parliaments should also use their influential **societal roles as change agents** advocating for behavior change and the limitation of global warming to 1.5°C to give people and ecosystems more room to adapt and remain below relevant risk thresholds.

The time for parliaments to take stronger and more concerted action to respond to climate change is now.

The IPU stands ready to assist parliaments and their members in this regard, as the oldest organization committed to peace and dialogue among all represented parties. We will vibrantly continue to facilitate an understanding between society actors, in order to evolve with the demands of our times, and ensure that the use of resources is wise and respectful. The IPU counts on energetic efforts as a high priority in our agendas.

Our Programmes support work at the national, regional and international levels by facilitating the transposition of international resolutions and strategies into domestic legislation and by promoting regional parliamentary cooperation.

In December of last year, during the IPU COP 25 Parliamentary meeting held in Madrid, we saw the gap between what the current state of the world requires and the actions we are taking. We all agreed that we need to take urgent action, and engage our communities for a real impact.

There, the President of the Spanish Congress of Deputies, Ms. Meritxell Batet Lamaña urged delegates that "[w]e must make progress towards a climate neutrality scenario in 2050, thus going beyond the goals of 2030, with a new development model, always bearing in mind the social impact that these measures might have, so that we can maximize opportunities for everyone, 'leaving no one behind'."

It is for this reason that I am happy to be here with all of you today. Parliamentarians are the voices of our people, and have a power to engage communities in the energy transformation with the adoption of national policies. Parliamentarians are the actors that can ensure the acceleration of renewable energy, by pressuring their governments and their budget priorities, and with this, their private sectors and the whole society too.

We are requiring from them, particularly, to engage and include all parts of society, with a special attention to gender and youth empowerment.

The IPU believes in decisive action on the ground, and is committed to progress in this direction when we define Working Groups for Sciences and Technology, between groups of members of the parliaments representing the 6 geopolitical groups.

The IPU resolutions have clearly demanded to institutionalize and strengthen the relations with the energy sector, and I am pleased we witnessed in 2019, the establishment of such an institutionalized agreement that will continue in 2020, and in the coming decade.

I want to wish you a successful meeting ahead, knowing that the IPU will remain committed to the deployment of renewable energetic sources, and will closely follow on your discussion and exchange of ideas.

Thank you.