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## Speech by IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong

2020 Virtual Global Parliamentary Forum at  
the World Bank and IMF Annual Meetings  
Session 3: Achieving a green and inclusive  
recovery post COVID-19

14 October 2020

Honourable Kandeh Yumkella,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to speak during this session on '*Achieving a green and inclusive recovery post COVID-19*' at the 2020 Virtual Global Parliamentary Forum. I would like to thank the Parliamentary Network, the World Bank and the IMF for the invitation to be a discussant in this important event.

I would like to thank the World Bank Group Vice President and Chief Economist, Ms. Carmen Reinhart, and the IMF Chief Economist, Ms. Gita Gopinath, for the very important topics they have addressed in their presentations. Ms. Reinhart has raised some very critical points on the current and expected future financial challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly for emerging markets and developing economies, and how efforts must be made to ensure new funding actually ends up benefitting the citizens of countries that need it the most. Ms. Gopinath has illustrated how economic policy tools can greatly reduce emissions while also bolstering economic growth, employment opportunities and income inequality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a wake-up call for countries around the globe. It is not only a health crisis, but a crisis with far reaching social and economic impacts. It has highlighted the fragilities that exist within society and within our economic structures. It has also revealed the deep inequalities that exist both within and across countries.

It is clear that the pandemic has not affected everyone equally. The current crisis has disproportionately affected people who are already living in vulnerable situations including poor people, women and children, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. Unequal access to health services, weak regional and global cooperation, and persistent income inequality are further compounding the challenges created by the pandemic. Consequently, the pandemic is likely to delay progress on achieving the SDGs, pushing critical development targets beyond reach. This again will hit the most vulnerable and marginalized people in society the hardest.

The pandemic is also unfolding during an era of catastrophic environmental change. The world is experiencing unprecedented impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and increasing habitat and biodiversity loss. Many of the people who have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic are also likely to be dealing with

severe challenges created by climate change. This is particularly true for people in developing countries, many of whom depend greatly on natural resources that are increasingly coming under pressure to sustain their livelihoods.

There is an urgent need for COVID-19 recovery strategies that are both inclusive and in line with climate action and environmental protection. The recovery provides an opportunity to follow more sustainable development pathways that prioritize both human and environmental well-being. It is important that countries implement forward-looking, well-resourced and inclusive responses that are aligned with international agreements on development and climate change. Through their legislative, budgetary, oversight and representation functions, parliaments have a key role to play in shaping both immediate and long-term recovery efforts. As countries are now resetting their priorities and reallocation resources to deal with the pandemic, parliaments are in a position to influence policies and budgets to ensure they 'build back better' from COVID-19. The legislative measures taken today will have a long-term effect on the planet's future. Going back to 'business as usual' cannot be an option.

The IPU has made supporting parliaments and parliamentarians in their efforts to tackle climate change in an inclusive way a priority. The IPU supports bilateral, regional and international parliament-parliament engagement to facilitate the sharing of good practices and lessons learned on addressing the climate emergency and in achieving sustainable development.

The IPU has been working with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to identify key approaches that parliamentarians may wish to consider in promoting a sustainable and green recovery that will not only help build more resilient economies but will also contribute to meeting countries' international commitments under the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The approaches are outlined in a forthcoming joint policy note for parliamentarians that will be released in the coming weeks.

The IPU-UNEP policy note outlines a number of green economy approaches, including in relation to clean energy, green jobs and biodiversity, and proposes parliamentary actions within each of these areas. For example, clean and renewable energy reduces greenhouse gas emissions and can accelerate energy access in developing countries. Clean energy can be prioritized in COVID-19 recovery packages. Parliamentarians have the unique opportunity to advance laws that contribute to both short- and long-term energy policies that promote this shift to renewable energy, including by prioritizing budget allocations for low-carbon activities.

The policy note also highlights how a shift to a greener economy could create millions of new jobs. Parliaments can introduce recovery laws that incentivize green investment and create employment in sustainable transport and energy efficiency sectors. At the same time, the policy note illustrates how parliaments can adopt legislation to ensure that COVID-19 recovery packages do not have any negative impacts on ecosystems, and that they actively work to preserve biodiversity, including through appropriate budget allocations. This policy note also recognizes the challenges faced by poor people, women, people with disabilities, indigenous people and other marginalized groups, illustrating the need for recovery legislation that is both gender-responsive and socially-inclusive.

The recovery process from this pandemic is a great challenge, but it also provides a unique opportunity to follow more just and sustainable pathways. The IPU is fully committed to supporting parliaments around the globe in implementing COVID-19 recovery activities that jointly contribute to environmental and development objectives.

In doing so, we can ensure that the most vulnerable groups of the population are not left behind and that we protect the environment as we recover. Now is the time for parliaments and all stakeholders to seize the opportunity to drive transformational change for a more green, inclusive and sustainable society that benefits both people and the planet.

Thank you very much.