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T +41 22 919 41 50  
F +41 22 919 41 60  
E [postbox@ipu.org](mailto:postbox@ipu.org)  
[www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)

Chemin du Pommier 5  
Case postale 330  
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex  
Geneva – Switzerland

# Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Creating a safe cyberspace for democracy  
Online hearing

Vienna, 6 December 2022

Dear Madam President,  
Excellencies,  
Dear colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to have the opportunity to address you on the occasion of this online hearing. Allow me to first thank H.E. Ambassador Faouzia Mebarki, Chairperson of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee to Elaborate a Comprehensive International Convention on Countering the Use of Information and Communications Technologies for Criminal Purposes, for being here with us today.

The work of the IPU and the United Nations have cross-fertilized many times in the past and this hearing is another opportunity to work together towards fostering long-lasting solutions to problems that impact us all. The aim of our collaboration is not only to emphasize the voices and concerns of parliamentarians as representatives of the people, but also to be mutually beneficial when, as in this case, a United Nations convention, that will be implemented at the national level, is being drafted. Today's hearing is an example of "best-practices": parliaments' voices will be heard already at the early stages of negotiations leading to an international convention.

As you may be aware, the IPU is currently in the process of drafting a resolution on the topic of cybercrimes and cyberattacks. I have the pleasure to acknowledge the presence of the co-Rapporteurs of the end resolution, Senator José Cepeda from Spain and Ms. Sara Falaknaz, Member of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates.

Today's hearing is about cybercrime, and I think we can agree on this fact: cyberspace has become a human realm. To efficiently resolve issues and address threats in cyberspace it is important for us to understand that we are not trying to protect binary realms, zeros and remote servers. Rather, we are seeking to bring online security to people who now depend on this technology for their day-to-day interactions, be it vital services such as water and electricity or their work.

Disruptive cyber capabilities are constantly evolving. The reach and precision of cybercrime are adapting to modern defense mechanisms, and, with the democratization of computer technologies, increasingly more malicious actors have access to tools that can cause serious disruptions. Cybercrime has now extended to impact democracy itself and is challenging our concept of crime and how to repress it. For us to be able to respond efficiently to cybercrime, it is essential to establish strong networks of collaboration within, between, and outside of parliaments, to ensure that information about cybercrime occurrences is shared.

Cyberthreats are global in nature but are experienced and lived differently at the national and individual level depending on the different level of dependency on cyberspace. Our response to cybercrime must be based on our shared experiences and guided by a forward-looking ambition to effectively create a safe cyberspace for citizens and for democracy where the needs of citizens are the central point of concern.

Parliaments and parliamentarians are the first line of response to threats experienced by the citizens they represent which is why parliaments have a particularly critical role to play in the global effort to counter cybercrime. Also, parliaments themselves are often the target of cyberattacks aimed at their functioning

as well as their communication with their constituencies. It is therefore vital to build a concrete understanding of the situation and the reality of cybercrime.

In keeping with its 2022-2026 strategy, the IPU strives to help build resilient and innovative parliaments, including their capability to respond to pandemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic which, in addition to the virus, brought with it a stark increase in the occurrences of cybercrime. These recent events have highlighted the need for parliaments and parliamentarians to be forward-looking, resilient, and able to evolve, adapt and manage risk as circumstances change. Doing so holistically, and with the support of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on cybercrime, I am certain that today's exchange will lead to a better inclusion not only of a parliamentary perspective in the convention but also of parliamentarians, through their roles and duties, in this global attempt to safeguard cyberspace from criminal abuse.

I thank again H.E. Ambassador Mebarki for this opportunity to share our parliamentary perspective and experience on how to secure cyberspace.

I wish you all a fruitful exchange.