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Speech by Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

Webinar on the Sustainable Development Goals
and the Role of Parliaments in SDG Implementation

Launch of the Thai Version of the IPU-UNDP SDGs
Self-Assessment Toolkit

18 May 2022

Ms. Pornpith Phetcharoen, Secretary-General of the House of Representatives of Thailand,
Mr. Renaud Meyer, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme in Thailand
Distinguished Senators and Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to deliver these opening remarks in this important webinar organized to launch the Thai version of the IPU-UNDP SDGs Self-Assessment Toolkit. Let me start by thanking the House of Representatives of Thailand for its commitment to the 2030 Agenda, and our UNDP partners, for the excellent collaboration we have in the SDG domain.

In participating in this webinar, I want to underscore the continuity in a trustful and long partnership that started in the very distant year of 1950 when the National Assembly of Thailand became a Member of the IPU. I am very much confident that this partnership will continue to yield many good results in this challenging time as the world embarks on a journey to find effective ways to address multiple parallel crises due to the COVID 19 pandemic while realizing the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Now more than ever there is a need to strengthen action to build a sustainable future for the people and the planet. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a severe impact on the realization of the SDGs. Not only does it risk hampering or reversing the gains achieved in a number of areas, but it may also exacerbate already high levels of inequality within and between countries. The economic downturn due to the crisis is uncovering structural imbalances and is disproportionately affecting women and the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of society.

The pandemic has been a terrible setback, but it could not be used as an excuse to divert the attention from the SDGs implementation. Governments are responsible for SDGs implementation, but their effective realization can only be achieved if all stakeholders are actively engaged. Parliaments must play a central role in this effort. Their legislative, oversight and budget responsibilities make them key players in, for example, improving the health coverage of the people they represent, combating inequalities, and building peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

Parliaments must integrate the SDGs in their key parliamentary functions and give political impetus towards implementing, monitoring progress on the SDGs and ensuring coherence. They should make sure that policies and budgets address the needs and concerns of the whole of society, especially the most vulnerable, and that these are in line with the national and international commitments their government has undertaken

Parliaments should also help build a solid legal framework, evaluate whether the existing and draft legislation is suitable or whether there is a need to propose law reforms or amendments that take into consideration the interconnectedness of the SDGs. The devastating consequences of COVID-19 demonstrate that a holistic approach based on the interconnection of the SDGs is strongly required to address structural problems and build back more sustainably, fairly and equitably.

Proactive engagement, strong political determination, coherent plans and cooperation are essential ingredients for an effective realization of SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's webinar gives us a golden opportunity to further discuss the role of parliament in effectively implementing the SDGs and the way the National Assembly of Thailand can use the newly translated version of the IPU/UNDP SDG self-assessment toolkit to evaluate its readiness to engage on the SDGs and identify the most suitable path to strengthen its action in a comprehensive way.

Many are the parliaments that have used this practical tool to identify their priorities and design a strategic action plan to effectively integrate the SDGs into their work and contribute to their achievement. I am confident the National Assembly of Thailand will also seize the momentum of the launch to accelerate action in SDG implementation. The IPU stands, of course, ready to provide assistance in this domain, together with UNDP, if the parliament wishes so.

I wish you a very successful webinar.

Thank you.