



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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Speaking notes for Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General

High-level meeting on the implementation of CEDAW General Recommendation No. 40
and follow-up to CSW70 political declaration

Geneva, 29 April 2026

Madame la Ministre, H.E. Ms. Aurore Bergé,
Madam Chair of the CEDAW Committee Ms. Nahla Haidar,
Dear colleagues and friends,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to join you today to discuss how far we have gone in implementing CEDAW General Recommendation 40 and what remains to be done.

The adoption of GR 40 did not happen by chance. It was the result of decades-long efforts by many of us in this room to recognize gender parity as a universal norm for all decision-making spaces. The IPU is proud to have been a partner in this process.

GR 40 opens a new chapter for women's leadership at the time we needed it the most. At a time of political polarization and multiple crises. At a time of pushback on women's rights.

GR 40 is not just an aspiration or an intention. Parity is possible. As we speak, 8 countries have 50% or more women than men in their lower or single chamber of parliament.

But our task is immense. At the time of Beijing in 1995, just over 11% of parliamentary seats were held by women. Today we are at 27.5%. So, there is still much work to do. And progress made so far can still be reversed.

Resistance to women's leadership is very vivid. Violence against women in politics is an abhorrent phenomenon, stifling women's voices and limiting their participation. Stereotypes and negative social norms still convey the message that women don't belong in the spaces where decisions are made. This is particularly true for young women and women from other underrepresented groups.

GR 40 acknowledges all that and shows us the way.

I remember the incredible movement building to get to a wide support base for GR 40. Today's meeting shows us that this support is still there.

At the IPU, GR 40 has given new impetus to our own efforts. We have disseminated it among our member parliaments and within our multistakeholder networks. And we have incorporated it within the IPU itself.

- A year ago, the IPU global conference of women parliamentarians in Mexico resulted in the adoption of a plan of action for parity, which calls for parity in numbers, parity in influence and a parity culture; our Governing Council endorsed this plan in October. So it is now an IPU institutional framework. The IPU parity plan clearly references GR 40 and provides the adherence of the interparliamentary community.

- In line with GR 40, our Members also adopted motions calling for parliamentary oversight in the nominations of ambassadors and of the UN Secretary General, with a view to ensuring equal leadership by women and men in multilateral spaces.
- GR 40 is also helping us to sustain momentum in many of the countries that are lagging behind in women's participation in parliament – we know progress cannot be taken for granted, and isn't linear, we have seen a slowdown of progress. GR40 is an authoritative guidance we always refer to in the countries we engage.
- We also practice what we preach. In April 2025, we incorporated the gender parity goal in our own statutes and we have strengthened provisions for shared leadership within the Organization. GR 40 is helping us continue to aim higher. We already had quotas within the IPU for a long time. As a result, our Executive Committee has parity, and both our President and Vice-President are currently women. I am also proud to say that, as I end my mandate as IPU Secretary General in June, my successor will be a woman. This is a first in the 137 years of existence of our Organization.

This did not happen overnight. We have had for 40 years a women's movement within the IPU. We have empowered male champions and we introduced our first quotas as early as in the 1980s. The most recent IPU bodies have a parity requirement.

Our practices and those from other international organizations are compiled in a toolkit we developed with Women at the Table and the International Gender Champions Secretariat – the Gender Responsive Assemblies toolkit. I invite all of you to make full use of it.

We cannot afford a piecemeal, incremental approach. We need bold, ambitious and sustained steps so that gender parity in decision-making becomes the norm. And there are plenty of examples of how to get there.

You can count on the IPU to continue to champion GR 40 and the ambitious standards it sets for all of us.