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Speech by the IPU Secretary General, Mr. Martin Chungong on the occasion of the launch of the ***Roadmap for Substantive Equality: 2030*** Global Partnerships for Women and Legislative Reform

Organized by UN Women, IPU and Equality Now

New York, 14 February 2017

Madam Executive Director of UN Women,
Madam Global Executive Director of Equality Now,
Distinguished guests,
Members of parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome! It gives me great pleasure to co-host this event with UN Women and Equality Now to launch *The Roadmap for Substantive Equality: 2030*.

I am delighted that, through this initiative, our three organizations can embody and promote partnerships for effective and impactful legal reform on gender equality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Multiple forms of legal discrimination against women and girls persist around the world today. These constitute a major impediment to the development of our societies.

Serious gaps remain, particularly regarding laws relating to the economic and personal status of women. Family laws continue to be the most difficult to reform, especially in those countries where the law is subordinate to religion and custom.

More should be done to address violence against women and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and child marriage, which are often entrenched in traditions that are at the very heart of certain societies.

In order to ensure the full realization of all women's fundamental rights, power relations will have to be transformed and structural inequalities addressed. This must entail enabling women to take ownership of their lives, their bodies and their destinies. These rights have to be enshrined in properly enforced laws. This is where parliaments and members of parliament have a key role to play.

Let us make no mistake: strong parliaments are key for ensuring that women's and girls' rights are promoted and protected by law, and that no law contains discriminatory provisions or disadvantages any given group.

Gender equality requires strong, comprehensive legislation and public policies that are non-discriminatory, support women's empowerment and address all forms of discrimination.

Putting laws into practice remains the main challenge. At the IPU, we know that the role of MPs is crucial in scrutinizing budgets to ensure that adequate financial and human resources are allocated to the effective implementation of legislation.

And we believe that parliamentary oversight is the only way to truly monitor the proper implementation of laws and policies.

For parliaments to meet these challenges and actively play their part in achieving substantive equality, they need to be more inclusive and representative, thus demonstrating their ability and willingness to achieve gender equality.

The road to equality begins with women's equal participation in parliament. Both political commitment and robust policies, such as quotas and electoral systems that facilitate the election of women, are needed for change to happen. We also strongly believe that these policies should be accompanied by measures to eliminate misogyny and curb violence against women in politics.

A recent IPU study revealed that of the 55 women MPs from 39 countries surveyed, over 80 per cent reported experiencing some form of psychological violence. This global phenomenon is both an obstacle to women's political empowerment and a violation of women's rights.

We must also promote specific measures to eliminate additional layers of discrimination that young women who want to be involved in politics often face. One of these measures is aligning the voting age with the age of eligibility to run for office.

Repealing discriminatory laws is not only the responsibility of women MPs, women's parliamentary caucuses, or gender equality parliamentary committees. The challenge of mainstreaming gender perspectives into all legislation should be the responsibility of all parliamentary bodies, and all MPs – both male and female.

We believe that parliaments need to engage in institutional reform so as to become stronger gender champions. To support our members in achieving this objective, we have developed a toolkit for parliamentarians to assess the gender-sensitivity of their institutions. The toolkit effectively challenges parliaments to take a fresh look at their working methods.

The roadmap for 2030 is before us and if we join our efforts and act as one, we can accomplish a great deal. A full range of alliances and partnerships - at all levels, from the local to the highest international spheres - are needed to progress.

Change must come from within countries, and we need local movements to see it through. We need partnerships between men and women MPs and among women MPs from across the political spectrum. We also need MPs to work hand-in-hand with civil society and grassroots women's organizations to prioritize how they intend to help end gender-based discrimination.

We need bilateral and regional development cooperation that is gender-sensitive and deliver for women and girls. We also need partnerships at the international levels from intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and other stakeholders.

As highlighted by the women Speakers of Parliament who met in December 2016 under IPU auspices, partnerships with the media, the private sector, and the academic, scientific and technological sectors are also needed.

One such example is our partnership with UN Women in a joint multi-year project to support parliaments as they amend and repeal existing discriminatory laws.

I am convinced that, if each of us plays our part, our 2030 equality goal can be achieved.

Thank you.