



Remarks

by

H.E. John W. Ashe

President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

New York

14 November 2013

Inter-Parliamentary Union – Annual Parliamentary Hearing

Official Opening: The Post-2015 Development Process

Please check against deliver

Ambassador Osorio, President of the ECOSOC,
Secretary-General,
Honourable Abdelwahad Radi, President of the IPU,
Distinguished Members of Parliament,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A pleasant good morning to each and every one of you.

It is my pleasure to open this morning's Annual Parliamentary Hearing, and to be part of the exchange of views that this forum allows. I know for many of you this time of year is perhaps not the best time in New York. But the fact that you are here in the cold is a testament of your commitment to the ideals of the IPU. I therefore wish to commend all those who came here from warmer climates for this event.

I also wish to congratulate you, President Radi, for your able stewardship of the Union.

To you the parliamentarians who are here today and come from around the world, let me say that I value your leadership and contributions to policy-making and development of legislation at the national level, and I urge you to remain vigilant in your resolve to ensure oversight, accountability, transparency and the strengthening of the institutions of governance in your respective countries.

Distinguished Parliamentarians,

Your concerted efforts in policy formulation and implementation, together with the constructive engagement of your citizens and the private sector, as well as our mutual collaboration will be pivotal to any new development agenda. The service of members of parliament the world over enhances the process and cause of democracy by providing a forum that gives expression to the will and voice of citizens.

The IPU provides a bridge from the national to the international and is therefore an important forum of communication amongst members of the global family of nations. The fact that many of today's development challenges are global and not solely national, the reality that the world is becoming increasingly borderless, that available technologies and social media transmit information from one part of the globe to the other almost instantaneously, make communication amongst parliamentarians all the more imperative.

I am particularly pleased to participate in this year's Hearing because the theme entitled, "Rethinking sustainable development; the quest for a 'transformational' global agenda in 2015" is highly relevant to the theme I have selected for the 68th session of the General Assembly, namely, "the post 2015 development agenda: setting the stage." I therefore assure you that as President of the General Assembly, you have my commitment to strengthening the bonds of cooperation between the General Assembly and the IPU, as envisaged in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document and relevant General Assembly resolutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This past September, the General Assembly was host to a Special Event focused on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which brought together world leaders to reinvigorate efforts to achieve the MDGs and set the parameters for a strong post 2015 development agenda. The event produced an outcome document that concretized the commitment of Member States to these two complementary tracks, and specifically laid out the roadmap for the realisation of a new model of development – one that is beneficial to both people and planet.

The outcome document from the Special Event builds upon the principles and values established in a number of other guiding UN documents: Agenda 21, the Millennium Declaration and the Rio+20 outcome document, the "Future We Want." Among other

imperatives, these seminal documents have called for democratic governance, human rights and the participation of all stakeholders in building an inclusive model for sustainable development. Some of these documents refer specifically to the involvement of parliaments, whose members will also have a role to play in developing and realising the SDGs.

The collaboration of which I speak is paramount to the success of our mutual objectives and as parliamentarians you are uniquely positioned and eminently qualified to influence the shape and content of your respective national development agendas and implementation processes. Your parliamentary membership should make you well aware of your specific national circumstances. We, in the UN, need you to bring this perspective and experience into the process of defining new goals, as well as translating the future development agenda into your own national perspectives, ultimately leading to credible laws and institutions within the context of your national realities. For while we seek to craft an international agenda with elements of commonality at the UN General Assembly level, the development model that each country employs must have its own peculiar DNA.

We also rely on you to define the fiscal and budgetary regimes needed to mobilize national resources toward financing development efforts, create new and innovative sources of financing as an adjunct to official development assistance and trade, build new partnerships and strengthen development endeavours amongst all stakeholders. In addition, we will look to you to assess our progress in effecting meaningful change in people's lives. Many of you did your utmost to achieve the MDGs, you now have the critical task of ensuring national accountability and oversight in the implementation of the post 2015 development agenda and the attainment of the SDGs. Just as you contribute to this process, I also call upon the organizations and bodies of the UN system to continue supporting you in your work, including your perspectives, and strengthening your role as parliamentarians.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you begin deliberations today, I encourage you to reflect on the priority areas I have highlighted for this current session of the General Assembly. Each of these will be discussed during the coming year in a series of six (6) informal High-level and thematic Debates, including the contributions of: women, the young and civil society; human rights and the rule of law; South-South, Triangular cooperation and ICT for development; partnerships; ensuring peaceful and stable societies; and water, sanitation and the sustainable energy. These events and/or thematic debates will provide platforms for substantive dialogue amongst Member States and other relevant stakeholders, to advance some of the key issues required for an integrated and priority-driven post-2015 development agenda. Your inputs as parliamentarians and law makers will enrich our discussions and are pertinent to all of the six clusters of themes selected.

As mentioned, one of these events will be on the role of women, youth and civil society in the post 2015 development agenda. In this regard, both the IPU and I share a concern about the inclusion of gender issues in the post-2015 development agenda. This was clearly evident in the deliberations of the IPU Women Speakers of Parliament, which were held over the last two days. Drawing on the many gifts, talents and skills of women as parliamentarians and in other leadership roles is a prerequisite for an inclusive development agenda. Yet as we all know, the percentage of women in parliaments globally is woefully inadequate, hovering roughly, at a low 20 percent.

Let us together, here at the United Nations and you, in your home countries, commit to increasing the number of women in parliaments and achieving equality, as outlined in the IPU Plan of action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments. Let us go further and truly empower women to realize their full potential and contribute comprehensively to the societies in which they reside. Let us recognize that women have skills and abilities that can benefit all citizens and they have the capacity to advance the cause of development. Under-utilization of women is both counterproductive and unsustainable. In a time of scarce resources, we cannot afford to alienate more than 50% of the world's human resource base.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In order to give rise to a truly transformative development agenda, members of parliament must work more collaboratively across countries, and in interdisciplinary ways at their national levels. They must ensure that sustainability underpins the policy making and implementation processes across all ministries, put in place the enabling conditions for the private sector and civil society to partner with governments to engender a green economy, review issues related to consumption and production patterns, initiate national dialogues, reinforce the interconnection in the minds of the respective citizens among the three pillars of development, namely, economic, social and environmental, and recognize that true development goes beyond the establishment of a set of international goals with time frames and targets. True development includes a philosophy of development, eradication of poverty, access to decent work and creating lives of dignity for citizens and for future generations. This is the reason that you serve and I urge you, as distinguished law makers, to continue promoting the political commitment needed in your respective countries for the creation of a robust and meaningful post 2015 development agenda.

I thank you for your service to your countries, to the international community and the cause of sustainable development. I am confident that today's Hearing, and your practical and constructive proposals, will inform the work of Member States as they begin to define the post 2015 agenda, and I look forward to hearing your ideas on how we can continue working together as one human family.

Thank you.
