



**Press Briefing by Hon. Prof. Peter H. Katjavivi, MP & Speaker  
of the National Assembly, in the Parliament of the Republic of  
Namibia, on the recent 133<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly & Related  
Meetings in Geneva**

**Parliament Buildings, Windhoek**

**28<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

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**Members of the Media,**

I welcome you all to this press briefing and thank you for honouring the invitation to share information on the outcomes of the just concluded 133th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly that was held in Geneva, Switzerland from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October. The Parliament of Namibia, which has been a member of this very important global organization of national parliaments since 1990 participated alongside 680

Parliamentarians from 137 countries. The Namibian delegation comprised of myself (Speaker of the National Assembly), Hon. Margaret Mensah-Williams, Deputy Chairperson of the National Council and also the President of the IPU Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, Hon. Ignatius Shixwameni, Hon. Bernadette Jagger, Hon. Victorine Shikongo, Hon. Barakias Namwandi, Hon. Rosalia Shilenga, Hon. Ambrosius Kandjii and support staff from both Houses of the Parliament. We were also accompanied by two Ex-Officials of the Children's Parliament.

The issues discussed included the currently on-going migration crisis, poverty eradication, the need to recognize and appreciate the fact that gender equality is a prerequisite of sustainable peace and security, the need to enforce human rights with a special focus on the rights of children, streamlining the achievement of sustainable development goals (SDGs) within the agenda of national parliaments as part of the commitment of the IPU New York Conference in support of the Post2015 agenda, and strengthening parliamentary oversight

and political will towards ensuring accountability so as to ensure the equitable and efficient use of national resources within our various countries.

## **Migration Crisis**

During the busy five-day Assembly, aptly themed “the moral and economic imperative for fairer, smarter and more humane migration”; IPU members focused on identifying parliamentary action to mitigate the global migration and refugee crisis. Rising xenophobia combined with the ongoing impact of the global economic crisis, continue to be at odds with the reality of regional demographics, skills shortages and an increasingly mobile workforce when defining national policies on migration. With nearly 60 million people either a refugee, asylum-seeker or displaced by the end of 2014 according to UNHCR, a strategy should be developed on how best to handle large flows of asylum-seekers and ensure their protection.

These salient issues were reflected upon during the course of the Assembly.

It is therefore against this background that the emergency IPU resolution focusing on identifying a fairer, smarter and more humane approach to migration was adopted during the Assembly. The IPU resolution, aimed at mobilizing parliaments and international organizations to ensure protection of and support to an estimated 30 million refugees in the world and it calls for the principle of “international relief” for refugees to be fully respected.

Members of Parliament committed to working towards the ratification of various international conventions as well as revising national laws where appropriate, that protect migrants’ and refugee rights.

Parliaments and governments are being called upon to develop special measures to address the specific needs of women, girls and young refugees, and to protect them from human trafficking.

## **Digital Freedoms**

Another challenging issue facing the world today; the protection of digital freedoms also took centre stage during this Assembly, where a resolution was adopted on democracy in the digital era and the threat to privacy and individual freedoms. The IPU Members have set new standards on protecting democracy and digital freedoms in an age of mass surveillance.

The resolution urges parliaments to review national laws to prohibit the interception, collection, analysis and storage of personal data without informed consent of concerned individuals or valid court order.

It underscores the need for privacy protection to be consistent across domestic and international borders, and calls on parliaments to ensure national law cannot be bypassed by data-sharing agreements with foreign States or multinationals.

The resolution also emphasizes the importance of striking a balance between national security and individual freedoms in ensuring that measures taken in the name of national security

and counter-terrorism don't undermine democracy or threaten human rights.

## **Terrorism and Global Security**

With terrorism remaining a priority concern for the global parliamentary community, the IPU Assembly focused on what actions national parliaments can take or are taking to meet international commitments to counter it.

Since 1996, IPU members have adopted 12 resolutions related to terrorism, the most recent at the Hanoi Assembly in March 2015, and have also committed to backing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and all relevant UN resolutions which underscore the important role of parliaments in ensuring States comply with international law in efforts to combat the terrorism-related crime.

An experts hearing on enhancing global cooperation on terrorism and protecting democracy and individual rights took place under the aegis of IPU's Committee on Peace and

International Security. The hearing will inform an expected resolution to be adopted at the 134th IPU Assembly in the Zambian capital, Lusaka, in 2016.

### **Equitable Utilisation of Resources**

The IPU's Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade examined another global issue; how to ensure lasting protection against destruction and deterioration for the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

The Namibian Parliament, represented by Hon. Bernadette Jagger also at this Assembly reported to the IPU Governing Council on the Regional Seminar on the Promotion of Child Nutrition in the SADC Region that was held in Windhoek from 28-29 September 2015. The seminar, hosted by the Namibian Parliament and organized by IPU and UNICEF, highlighted the action Members of Parliament can take to combat this cycle of poverty, in particular by improving nutrition programmes and policies. Concrete recommendations made at the end of the event will help strengthen parliamentary responses on

nutrition. In this regard, the Children's Parliament was also an important aspect of the discussion.

Finally, Namibia is fortunate to have one of its own Members, Hon. Margaret Mensah Williams, as the President of the IPU Coordinating Committee on Women Parliamentarians. This is a body that plays a pivotal role of championing women emancipation within the IPU. There was a panel on gender parity at the conference. This panel highlighted the significance of gender equality in sustainable development.