

PRESS RELEASE

Speaker Katjavivi addresses the IPU Assembly in Geneva to highlight the role of parliaments as early responders to human rights abuses

25 October 2016

Speaking earlier today, Speaker Katjavivi who is leading a delegation of Members of Parliament told a gathering of more than 700 MPs from 138 countries including 67 Speakers of Parliament and 41 Deputy Speakers, that “communities would love to know, understand and appreciate that they are in charge of their own affairs, that they are consulted on how they would love to be governed, and that their opinions do matter in decision making”. These remarks were made in keeping with the theme of the Assembly **“Human Rights Abuses as Precursors of Conflict: Parliaments as Early Respondents”**

Members of Parliament are convening in Geneva, Switzerland for the 135th IPU Assembly from 24 to 27 October 2016, to determine among other issues specific ways in which parliaments can respond effectively to serious human rights violations and their underlying causes, including human rights situations likely to lead to conflict.

Speaker Katjavivi supports the notion that Parliamentarians should be at the forefront in raising the alarm and taking action when serious human rights challenges arise and further stated that “in countries where there has been lawlessness, Parliaments have often offered the only source of hope for the masses. Civil society and the media are very important partners of legislators in exposing human rights abuses and advocating for perpetrators to be brought to justice. We should therefore team up to ensure that the rule of law prevails and build long lasting institutions and systems in our various countries and regions.”

No country is immune to human rights violations. Across the world, marginalization, political exclusion, religious intolerance, poverty, and undue restrictions to fundamental freedoms such as the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, are prevalent. Failure to address human rights challenges runs counter to national and international obligations, and creates a breeding ground for conflict if abuses become more widespread.

The Assembly will cover many additional issues during the 5 days. These include the UN response to allegations of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers, the role of parliament in preventing outside interference in the

internal affairs of sovereign States and the role of MPs in countering the activities of vulture funds. It will also look at the promotion of enhanced international cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the freedom of women to participate fully in political processes fully, safely and without interference, and the need to build partnerships between men and women to achieve this objective.

The Namibian delegation comprises of the following Members of both Houses of Parliament: Hon. Mensah-Williams (Chairperson of the National Council and the Chairperson of the IPU Women Parliamentarians), Hon. Dienda, Hon. Haingura, Hon. Kandumbu (Deputy Chairperson of the IPU Namibia Branch), Hon. Katamelo (Chairperson of the IPU Namibia Branch) and Hon. Kavara.