



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

130
years of
empowering
parliamentarians

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Office of the
Secretary General

To all IPU Members

Geneva, 16 April 2020

Dear President,
Dear Madam President,

It is my pleasure to share with you information about recent activities carried out by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in March 2020 to mark International Women's Day and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. These activities contribute to the overall objective to promote and achieve gender equality, in and through parliaments.

We have published our annual flagship report *Women in parliament: 1995–2020, 25 years in review*. This publication provides detailed information on women's participation in parliament around the world since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. The publication analyzes regional trends and country developments, recaps key lessons learned and proposes a way forward. Over a 25-year span, the overall percentage of women in parliaments has more than doubled, reaching 25 per cent in 2020, up from 11.3 per cent in 1995. However, looking at the past five years, progress has slowed down as compared to the previous 5-year spans. The IPU will be using this publication to support parliaments and inform action towards gender equality in parliament. You can find the report in English, French and Spanish at <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review>.

We have also released the 2020 edition of the *Map on Women in Politics* prepared in partnership with UN Women. The *Map* provides a snapshot of women's participation in parliament, in the executive and in the highest spheres of political leadership among heads of State and/or government and Speakers and deputy Speakers of parliament. The *Map* was launched via a video by the IPU President, Ms Cuevas Barron, and the Executive Director of UN Women, Ms Mlambo-Ngcuka. The video is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDmBA_kbFgQ. The *Map* is intended to raise awareness of progress as well as gaps in women's representation in politics. By allowing countries and parliaments to compare each other, it triggers political interest and opens doors to questioning and action. The *Map* is available in English, French, Spanish and soon in Arabic and can be accessed at: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/infographics/2020-03/women-in-politics-2020>

Should you wish to receive hard copies of the *Women in parliament* publication and of the *Map*, we will gladly mail these to you as soon as possible.

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In partnership with the State University of Arizona, UN Women, the World Bank and others, we have launched a first series of videos on Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The videos provide ready-to-use tools for parliamentarians to build knowledge and awareness on SDG 5 and to inform parliamentary action towards its implementation. They are available on the IPU website at:

<https://www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2020-03/video-five-things-you-can-do-improve-gender-equality-in-leadership> and

<https://www.ipu.org/news/news-in-brief/2020-03/video-women-peace-and-security>.

International Women's Day was also an opportunity to renew publicly political engagement in support of gender equality. The IPU President and the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, issued a joint statement reaffirming their commitment to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (<https://www.ipu.org/news/statements/2020-03/statement-presidents-ipu-and-ep-international-womens-day>) Political messages were also sent through the IPU e-Bulletin of March 2020 with its two press releases available at:

<https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2020-03/25-years-after-beijing-ipu-analysis-shows-gender-parity-possible> and

<https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2020-03/in-2020-world-cannot-afford-so-few-women-in-power>.

In times of crisis as the current COVID-19 pandemic, gender equality must remain high on the global, national and individual agenda. The response to Covid-19 must therefore be gender sensitive. This is why, in my capacity as Secretary General of the IPU and as Chair of the Global Board of the International Gender Champions, I have released an Opinion Piece titled *COVID-19: What does it mean for gender?* The opinion piece is available at:

<https://www.ipu.org/news/voices/2020-03/covid-19-what-does-it-mean-gender>.

We have also actively carried out a global campaign on Parliaments in times of pandemic (<https://www.ipu.org/parliaments-in-time-pandemic>). Through this campaign, the IPU provides regularly updated information on action taken by parliaments in response to the crisis and to continue to function (virtually or physically) thereby continuing to fulfil their mandate – a prerequisite to democracy and good governance. This campaign has been complemented with additional guidance for parliaments, including on human rights and on gender-responsiveness facing Covid-19. You will find enclosed the "*Gender and COVID-19: A guidance note for parliaments*". This note is available on the following link:

<https://www.ipu.org/gender-and-covid-19-guidance-note-parliaments>

I am sure you will be interested in sharing these resources and tools widely in your Parliament/Organization and among your networks. I am hopeful that you will find the data, analysis, guidance and appeals contained in these documents useful as you pursue efforts to further gender equality.

I would welcome receiving information on how you have used or will use these resources so that we can duly reflect your actions in future reports and amplify the message through social media and other means of communication.

As gender equality and women's rights and empowerment are an all-time priority, the IPU will continue its work towards these critical objectives beyond the special occasion of International Women's Day and throughout 2020 and the years to come.

I look forward to doing so in continued cooperation with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Chungong', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin Chungong
Secretary General