



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

National Assembly, New Assembly Building,
Reg. Pye Lane Banjul, The Gambia

- **Your Excellency President of the IPU;**
- **Honorable Speaker of the Parliament of Rwanda;**
- **Honorable Speakers of Parliaments here present;**
- **Representatives of Regional and International Bodies;**
- **Distinguished delegates;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**
- **All protocols respectfully observed.**

I bring to you warm greetings from the smiling coast of Africa, The Gambia. As head of delegation,

I am deeply honoured and privileged to be given the opportunity to address the **145th IPU Assembly** taking place here in this beautiful city of Kigali, Rwanda.

- At the outset, I wish to register on behalf of the Gambian delegation my heart-felt thanks and appreciation to the Honourable Speaker and the Parliament of Rwanda for successfully hosting the **145th IPU** Assembly.
- I would also like to extend profound gratitude to His Excellency **Mr. Duarte Pacheco**, the IPU President as well as Mr. **Martin Chungong**, the IPU Secretary General and the Parliament of Rwanda for the well-planned and coordinated meeting.

- Mr. President, distinguished delegates, the theme for the **145th IPU Assembly** described as:

“Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliaments as drivers of change for a more resilient and peaceful world” has indeed been a simmering topic of discussion in recent years by all actors in the democratic decision-making processes. It is coming at a time when the world is grappling with protracted political upheavals and insecurity as a result of prevalent policies of intolerance and discrimination across the globe. It is, therefore, very topical and could not be more relevant.

- While acknowledging that gender-sensitive parliament is in effect a recipe for gender equality, it is essentially in the best interest for a genuine and inclusive democracy.

Mr. President, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

- Over the years, the responsibility of advocating gender equality rested entirely on few Women and organizations. However, it is encouraging that the responsibility has now been shifted to parliaments as institutions representing the diverse interests of all citizens.

Mr. President, distinguished delegates.

- It is my humble opinion that there is a glimmer of hope in the drive to promoting gender-sensitive parliaments as many parliamentary institutions around the world are working to move away from their traditional male-dominated membership towards advocating for more gender equality.

- However, implementing that change would involve looking at the institution itself with a critical eye, acknowledging unseen barriers that deter the presence of women, limit their participation or hinder progress towards gender equality, and then taking strong action to address them.
- The key obstacles hindering gender equality are more of culture and religion. It is high time we broke those barriers and elect women to leadership and decision-making positions.
- Therefore, this august Assembly is envisaged to provide an excellent opportunity for our community of National Parliaments to come together to strengthen parliamentary efforts to drive change and address global issues by reaching agreements and consensus on legal frameworks, policies and actions encompassing

the theme of “**Gender equality and gender-sensitive parliament for a more resilient and peaceful world**”.

- The government of the Gambia under the visionary leadership of **His Excellency President Adama Barrow** is a staunch advocate and champion of gender equality and women empowerment. The Gambia has ratified and domesticated most regional and international conventions relating to women.
- At the national front, a new National Gender Policy is being formulated **[2023-2033]**, the **Women’s Act 2010** and its amendment 2015, the **Domestic Violence Act 2013** and the **Sexual Offences Act 2013** to succeed the **2010- 2020** Policy on Gender and Women Empowerment by the government through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare in consultation with relevant stakeholders all of

which is aimed at ensuring inclusion of women in policy documents and demystify the negative perception against them.

- Furthermore, the government has also established a Directorate of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare as an additional testimony to its ironclad commitment to gender mainstreaming.
- Recently, the said Directorate has reviewed and validated the final report on the list of issues and questions in relation to the 6th periodic Report of The Gambia to the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women [CEDAW] with a view to generating stakeholders to inform the responses of the CEDAW periodic

report, review the submissions made by the key agencies as well as to validate the report as per sector specificities.

- As we speak, a new National Gender Mainstreaming Strategy Bill has also been formulated to be tabled before Cabinet and the National Assembly for enactment. With this, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare will work with all sectors to mainstream gender in national policies and programmes with the overall objectives of ensuring gender programming and budgeting.
- It is also gratifying to note that the National Assembly have recently passed into law the National Women Enterprise Fund Act as part of efforts to promote the equal opportunity agenda.

The long-term objective of this Act is to establish Women's Bank to provide women entrepreneurs and organizations access funds to establish or expand their businesses.

- However, despite these advances, there is still room for improvement, more specifically on the participation and representation of women in governance.
- Notwithstanding, we would not rest on our laurels as we will continue to champion gender and women empowerment at the level of parliament together with actors and stakeholders to ensure that gender sensitivity prevails across institutions and societies.
- I, therefore, urge the IPU being the sole global parliamentary network to provide the necessary

tools to support parliaments in assessing and Monitoring gender-sensitivity in terms of their organization and working procedures.

- It is also worth noting that Gender-sensitive parliaments are not a simple and “static” phenomenon but display a high level of complexity and change across countries and across time.
- There is not a single path that leads to gender-sensitivity: one country may start from increasing the number of women MPs, while another may focus on creating more gender-sensitive governance and political parties.
- What is common for all is that gender-sensitive parliamentary institutions are more efficient and

able to better respond to the needs of women and men.

- In conclusion, I would like to encourage all Member Parliaments of the IPU to make the most of the **145th Assembly** by joining voices and efforts to make significant global impacts in the promotion of peace, gender equality, and sustainable development for the benefit of our people we represent and the world at large.
- I thank you all for your kind attention.