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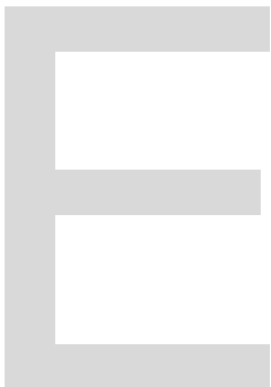
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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(j) Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 61st session of the Commission on the status of Women

(New York, 17 March 2017)

1. On 17 March 2017, the IPU and UN Women held their annual parliamentary meeting on the occasion of UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York.
2. This year's event was entitled *Empowering parliaments to empower women – Making the economy work for women*. It was very well attended, with 191 participants, including 139 members – of whom 13 were men – from parliaments of 47 countries.
3. The meeting was opened by Mr. M. Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU, and Ms. P. Mlambo-Ngucka, Executive Director of UN Women, and chaired by Ms. M. Mensah-Williams, President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and Chairperson of the National Council of the Parliament of Namibia. The other speakers included members of parliament, experts and representatives of international organizations.
4. The debates focused on parliamentary strategies to achieve women's economic empowerment. In the first session, participants discussed means to eliminate legal and social barriers to women's economic empowerment. In the following session, they analyzed how parliaments can empower women at work, in both the formal and informal economies. In the third and final session, the focus was on how to promote women's financial inclusion, in particular by ensuring women's access to financial services and business opportunities.
5. The participants agreed on the following points:
 - Women's economic empowerment requires addressing cross-cutting issues, such as gender stereotypes, discriminatory legislation, gender-based violence and unequal access to education and decision-making positions. Nearly 155 countries in the world still have gender-discriminatory legislation. There is an urgent need to repeal any legal provision that discriminate against women. The participants stressed the need to enhance women's political participation, which currently stands at merely 23.3 per cent in parliament on average. Having more women in decision-making positions will promote women's economic empowerment. The participants urged the IPU to pursue its efforts in this regard in collaboration with national parliaments and partners, such as UN Women.



#IPU136

- Parliaments must review labour and social policies so as to promote equality at work. They must promote affordable childcare and ensure that unpaid care work is shared between men and women so as to ensure equality in paid work. This is key to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, and in particular target 5.4. Legislation on equal pay is also needed. Parliaments must also provide for social protection coverage across all sectors, including those where women predominate – such as the care economy and the informal sector – but also for self-employed women. They must ensure work is a safe work-place for women and combat sexual harassment. Also, measures are needed to ensure that women are at the leadership of companies.
- Parliaments should promote women's ability to make economic decisions – so as to enable them to own land, access credit, freely invest, make savings and start their own businesses. This is a key element of SDG 5, in particular target 5.A. Specific, targeted measures for women's financial inclusion are required. Financial services must be accessible and affordable, but women also need support to increase their chances of accessing available opportunities. Budgets and fiscal policies must also be scrutinized through a gender lens to ensure that they deliver for women.

6. The participants also identified cross-cutting issues that also need to be addressed by parliaments.

- Women are not a homogenous group; some may need specific measures to have equal economic opportunities. Women with disabilities require particular attention and need to be represented in political decision-making.
- All legislation on women's economic empowerment requires strong oversight from parliamentarians to ensure that it is implemented, resourced, monitored and delivers for women.
- Data collection, in particular sex-disaggregated data, is needed so as to inform parliamentary decisions and promote gender-sensitive reform. That way, parliaments can also ensure accountability.
- It is crucial to form partnerships, including with fellow women, as well as with men and financial institutions and civil society organizations.

7. The parliamentary meeting was webcast and can be viewed at; <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/watch/empowering-parliaments-to-empower-women-making-the-economy-work-for-women/5363532505001>. It received good coverage on social media.

8. Women's economic empowerment will continue to be at the core of IPU's work and objectives. The proceedings of the 2017 IPU-UN Women parliamentary meeting at CSW, alongside the resolution on *Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development* to be adopted at the 136th IPU Assembly, will inform IPU's continued efforts to advance women's economic empowerment. Parliaments are encouraged to use these tools in their work and debates at the national level.

9. In addition to the Parliamentary meeting, the IPU also organised a series of side events on the occasion of the 61st session of the CSW. The side events took place between 14 and 16 March and were all very well attended, with 50 to 60 participants from governments, parliaments and civil society at each event. The focus was on: violence against women in politics; women's participation in politics; repealing discrimination in nationality laws; preventing violent extremism by changing economic policies and promoting gender equality; and, protecting children from violence.

10. Also on the occasion of the 61st session of the CSW, on 15 March, the IPU and UN Women launched the *Map Women in politics 2017* at a joint press conference. The event received wide media coverage with more than 500 articles using freshly released data on women in parliament and in executive positions.