

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**MESSAGE TO 127TH ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
Quebec City, 21 October 2012**

*Delivered by Mr. Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal,
Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information*

Honorable Andrew Scheer, [*Speaker of the House of Commons*]
Honorable Abdelwahad Radi, [*President of the Inter-parliamentary Union*],
Secretary-General Johnsson,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to convey greetings to the distinguished parliamentarians and others who have gathered for the 127th Assembly of the Inter-parliamentary Union.

At a time of rising insecurity, injustice, inequality and intolerance, robust parliamentary engagement can make a significant difference in promoting common progress and shared values. You play a key role in ratifying global treaties and agreements. Your legislative actions translate international standards into local laws. Your budgetary authority gives you the power to put people first. And through your commitment to democratic governance, you can advance the rule of law at home and at the international level.

The subjects you will discuss in Quebec reflect many of the challenges before the United Nations. They also mirror my own five-year Action Agenda, which I presented to the General Assembly earlier this year.

Sustainable development is one of my top priorities. The 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals is approaching fast. We need your support to accelerate progress towards meeting the MDGs in all regions. We need your engagement in my Education First, Sustainable Energy for All and Every Woman Every Child initiatives, and in meeting the Zero Hunger Challenge launched earlier this year at the Rio+20 Conference. We need your participation in the hugely important effort to articulate a post-2015 development agenda. You also have a clear role to play in promoting gender equality, in particular greater participation of women in parliament, especially in the many countries where the percentages are woefully low and women's voices are not being heard.

The IPU's efforts are also welcome complement to UN efforts to prevent conflict, build durable peace and help countries in transition. In the Maldives and other political

crises, the IPU promotes useful dialogue. In Myanmar and other transition countries, the IPU strengthens the capacity of parliaments. I encourage you to reinforce this work.

I applaud you for choosing to have a special debate in Quebec on citizenship, identity and linguistic and cultural diversity. The exclusion of marginalized groups is often at the heart of violent conflict and social unrest. The imperative of inclusiveness, pluralism and human rights permeates UN engagements, from prevention to peacebuilding and electoral assistance. Here, too, ensuring the full and equal participation of women is essential for peace and stability to take root.

I also thank the IPU for highlighting the role of parliaments in implementing the Responsibility to Protect. In the past year-and-a-half, the responsibility to protect has been front and centre as never before. Resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly, Security Council, and Human Rights Council have referred explicitly to the concept. There have been important advances, but the situation in Syria has rightly led many to question the international community's commitment.

The UN family is doing everything it can to respond to the escalating humanitarian crisis, especially as harsh winter weather approaches. The situation, which includes appalling human rights abuses, is a threat to international peace and security, with the potential for dangerous spill-over into Syria's neighbors. We need unified international support for the efforts of the Joint Special Representative to set in motion a Syrian-led transition. The international community has a moral responsibility, a political duty and a humanitarian obligation to stop the bloodshed and find peace for the people of Syria.

Distinguished delegates,

At this time of turmoil and global transition, let us deepen our strategic partnership – and let us raise our levels of ambition. Together, as partners, we can meet today's tests and seize the opportunities of an era of dramatic change.