

**Speech by**  
**HE Mr. Jamal Fakhro, Head of the Inter-**  
**parliamentary Group Delegation of the Kingdom of**  
**Bahrain**  
**before**  
**The 134<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly**  
**Lusaka (Zambia), (19-23 March 2016)**

**20 March 2016**

HE Mr. Saber Chowdhury, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

HE. Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General,

Excellencies, Heads of Delegations,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalamu Alaikom wa Rahmatu Allah wa Barakatuh,

I am pleased to welcome you all in the 134<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly which continuously constitutes an opportunity for world parliaments to exchange experiences and ideas on critical issues of concern to our countries and parliaments, and to converge points of view, so as to achieve high levels of performance and accomplishment. Wishing the works of this conference all success, and thanking the Republic of Zambia for hosting this conference and for its kind hospitality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Youth, between the age of 15 and 25, constitute a fifth of the world's population. In some countries, youth constitute more than half of the population. This poses a challenge for the international community and require action for the inclusion of this group and meeting their various essential needs.

Youth represent a cornerstone to development and progress of countries due to their dedication towards change and hard work, and their great capability to learn new concepts and ideas and tap various sources of knowledge and sciences, utilizing them into successful practices, in addition to their constant strife for challenge, adventure, embarking upon life and overcoming crises, in a more daring way than older people.

Youth may constitute the opposite of all that as well, and their positive role may turn into a negative one, if they do not receive the

attention they deserve, such as adequate education services, youth and sport programs and activities, among other areas.

Hence the importance of mobilizing and righteously guiding the energy of youth, so as to ensure the preparation of promising youth leaderships who are capable of effective participation in decision-making processes, and to ensure that the energy and potential of youth are not wasted in inadvisable means, and that they are not exploited by extremist and outlaw groups.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The international community acknowledges the importance of engaging youth in political activities and enabling them to play an effective role in the political processes of the countries of the world. Youth are considered a power that can be positive and influential in bringing about adequate political and social changes and promoting different aspects of social mobility. However, it can also be negative and destructive to societies, states and peoples. Hence, it is crucial to make every effort to facilitate the engagement of youth in consultation processes, and to organize discussion panels for youth to explore their aspirations and encourage their engagement in the positive political work at an early age, which contributes to the development of political awareness based on practices that respect the plurality and divergence of views instead of promoting conflict.

Engagement gives one the right to discuss and express opinion on all issues of concern and develops a sense of belonging, and hence the importance of diligent efforts to ensure that youth around the world are granted their right to political participation whether as electors or candidates at an early age, which ensures the adequate representation of youth in legislative institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kingdom of Bahrain has paid much attention to youth as the cornerstone of the development process in the country. Decision-makers in the Kingdom of Bahrain recognize the importance of

youth in advancing the process of development to keep pace with the challenges witnessed in our world today, and their active participation in the management their country. In this regard, the voting age has been recently reduced from 21 to 20 with a view to further reduce it on a gradual basis. Moreover, the Ministry of Youth and Sport has been recently established undertaking issues of concern to youth.

This approach by the country asserts the Kingdom's support to the prevailing approach in the international community to give youth a greater opportunity to represent themselves and express views on their issues and concerns.

The Legislative has worked in accordance with this approach to give attention to issues related to youth, and it has established a Committee on Youth and Sport, in both the Shura Council and the Council of Representatives, with a view to examine topics related to youth, including giving them the opportunity for engagement in all areas. The Legislative has also observed the inclusion of projects that target youth, contribute to the development of their social role, and realize their ambitions and aspirations, in both the Government Action Plan 2016-2018 and the State Budget 2015-2016, in addition to establishing channels of community outreach with Bahraini youth, promoting their engagement in presenting ideas and submitting proposals on their key issues.

Lastly, I reiterate my assertion that the Legislative of the Kingdom of Bahrain supports all efforts made by parliamentarians around the world to ensure that youth are engaged in the political process and are able to freely voice their views, by using all oversight and legislative tools available to achieve this goal.