



**PARLIAMENTARY MEETING ON THE OCCASION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE**

Cancún (Mexico), 6 December 2010

*Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the
Mexican Congress, with the support of UNDP*



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**SPEECH BY THE IPU PRESIDENT, DR. THEO-BEN GURIRAB,
AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MEETING
ON THE OCCASION OF COP16/CMP6**

Cancún, 6 December 2010

Distinguished Speaker of the Mexican Congress,
Madam Representative of the United Nations Development Programme,
Fellow parliamentarians,
IPU Secretary General
Ladies and gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you to Cancun and to this parliamentary meeting on the occasion of COP 16. Cancun has become a preferred venue for important international conferences. This is one of them.

I want to thank the Speaker of the Congress of Mexico and through him the Chamber of Deputies which has worked closely with us in preparing this joint event. Thank you so much for your efficient cooperation and for the very warm and hospitable welcome you have given us.

I also wish to give a special thanks to the United Nations Development Programme for its kind cooperation in organizing this event. Without the very efficient help of the Resident Coordinator Magdy Martinez from the UNDP we would not have this exciting programme of discussions to look forward to today.

Fellow parliamentarians,

The much awaited Cancún session of the UN Climate Change Conference is well underway. At the end of this week, we will learn what government negotiators will have achieved in terms of reaching new agreements to mitigate climate change. Later this morning the President of the Conference, Mexican Foreign Secretary Patricia Espinosa, will inform us of the current state of these negotiations. And during the day I am sure many of you will

provide your own reactions and suggestions. Clearly, we parliamentarians have a stake in the outcome.

However, the real purpose of today's meeting lies elsewhere. As I see it we pursue dual objectives which go to the very heart of development and democracy. Let me explain.

The beginning of the millennium was a splendid period in our history. There was real optimism in the air; we all shared a hope that together we could reduce poverty and bring prosperity to all citizens in both the industrialized and developing worlds. We reached a historic consensus on eight millennium development goals to be met by 2015.

A few months ago we met in New York to take stock of progress. We proudly hail some important progress. Yet, if truth be told, we must also recognize we are not where we had expected to be. We have five more years to reach the targets we set at the turn of the millennium. But it will require an almost superhuman effort by all – governments, parliaments and others - if we are to reach them.

When the world leaders set the goals barely ten years ago, climate change had not yet become a core issue in the development debate. Today this has all changed. Yes, we have to adopt mitigating measures. But, we must also adapt to climate change, and this will be particularly important in developing countries which are most vulnerable to the effects of the changes in world climate. Adaptation will involve preparing to address the consequences of climate change – such as forced migration for example and acute unemployment – but also changing our economies towards a green economy.

As I see it, this is the real challenge we face as lawmakers. How can we help in this process? The debates we will have today should help provide answers to us all. At the end of the day we should have a better understanding of what we can do to bring about this change. We cannot sit idly by and wait for negotiators to reach binding global agreements that we can then implement. Instead, we should seize the initiative and legislate change and exercise oversight. We should make the best of the coming twelve months to put in place legislative frameworks and policy stimulus packages for development that are based on low carbon and eco-efficient economic growth.

I very much hope that when we meet next year in South Africa we will be in a position, each and every one of us, to report back at that conference on important steps we have taken to address climate change through determined efforts in parliament in support of development and climate-resilient societies.

The second objective of today's meeting has to do with democracy. All of us have important responsibilities to provide transparency and accountability in public affairs. We have a popular mandate, not only to make laws, but also to hold government to account. We do this in multiple ways in our daily parliamentary work and at conference venues like these.

International negotiations cannot be exempt from our scrutiny. We all question ministers and provide input throughout the negotiating process. Moreover, international agreements cannot be implemented without action by us in parliament. Ratifying agreements, implementing them through enabling legislation, and providing funds for programmes that put them into effect all require action by us.

Today's meeting therefore plays an important part of our efforts in the IPU to provide a parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations and other multilateral for a, the G20 included. In a few days time, the United Nations General Assembly will adopt a resolution on cooperation between the UN, national parliaments and the IPU.

In that resolution, members States will decide to more systematically engage with the IPU in organizing and integrating a parliamentary component of and contribution to major United Nations deliberative processes and the review of international commitment. Today's meeting is very much part of that process of bringing us, the members of parliament, much closer to the UN and the international negotiations that take place under its auspices.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Fellow members of parliament,

At the end of these deliberations, I hope we will reach consensus on our own declaration. It is brief and I think to the point. It sends a clear message from the global parliamentary community to COP 16. And it gives us something to build upon as we go home to our parliaments where our real work will take place to follow up on our debate here in Cancun.

With these words of introduction, I wish you a fruitful discussion. Thank you for your attention.

Let me now pass the floor to our host, the Speaker of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies, Mr. Jorge Carlos Ramírez Marín.