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URGENT MESSAGE

Cancellation of the 142nd IPU Assembly and related meetings (Geneva, 16–20 April 2020)

12 March 2020

Office of the
Secretary General

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

It is with deep regret that I must inform you that, in keeping with the IPU Statutes and Rules, the IPU President has asked me to communicate the decision of the Executive Committee, taken upon the recommendation of the Secretary General, that the 142nd IPU Assembly, due to take place in Geneva from 16 to 20 April, is cancelled.

This decision has been taken in light of the public health emergency of international concern (COVID-19), now formally declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and follows a careful risk assessment based on the information provided by the WHO and the Swiss authorities.

This exceptional measure aims to contribute to the global effort to contain the spread of COVID-19 and safeguard the health and safety of our Members, partners and staff. At the same time, and in light of the drastic measures that are currently in place (the ban of large public gatherings, closing of schools, lockdown of affected regions and countries, severe restrictions on travel, etc), it seeks to ensure the inclusiveness that our IPU Assemblies require.

We are in touch with the Executive Committee, and every effort will be made to ensure the continuity of IPU decisions and operations in the weeks and months ahead. As provided by our Statutes and Rules, and given the extraordinary nature of the current situation, we will be consulting with the members of the Governing Council via correspondence on urgent decisions that cannot wait until the next Assembly in October.

Once conditions allow, and if necessary, we will be convening special sessions of the Executive Committee, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, and other smaller groups (Bureaux of the Standing Committees, Advisory Groups, IHL Committee, etc). In all cases, IPU committees and groups will be encouraged to continue their work as needed through virtual or online consultations.

More generally, the current circumstances offer an opportunity for us to reflect on alternative ways of doing business apart from, or in addition to, face-to-face meetings. The IPU has already joined a UN task force that is examining technical solutions such as virtual meetings and remote interpretation. We will keep you posted on developments in this regard.

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I very much regret the current state of affairs, but under the circumstances we must give top priority to the safety and well-being of our Members and staff, and have no other option but to cancel the April Assembly. The 142nd IPU Assembly will now take place in Kigali, Rwanda, from 11 to 15 October 2020.

In these difficult and uncertain times, we express our solidarity with you and wish you all the best.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Martin Chungong', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Martin Chungong
Secretary General