

Her Excellency, the Right Hon. Dr Tulia Ackson, President of the IPU and Speaker of the Parliament of Tanzania

Mr Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU

Distinguished Young Parliamentarians

Honoured guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Armenia for its excellent hospitality and very warm welcome. I would equally like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to the IPU for their invitation to participate in this momentous event.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of this conference, “Avoiding Lost Generations, Preserving Education and Employment Under All Circumstances,” directly aligns with our current session, “Countdown to 2030: Where are we on youth education and employment?”.

As the world’s youngest Speaker of Parliament, a recognition bestowed upon me by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and also as the President of the Association des Parlements des Etats membres de la Commission de l’Océan Indien (AP-COI), an Association regrouping the Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) of the Indian Ocean, I have been invited by the IPU to share my perspective on the value of youth political leadership to protect and promote education and employment for youth in times of crisis and more particularly from the perspective of one of many small island states dealing with emergencies, including the climate change emergency.

Youth Empowerment and Education: Shaping Our Future in the Countdown to 2030

As we stand here today, we find ourselves at a *crucial juncture* in human history. [pause] With just under six years left until 2030, the deadline for achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, we must ask ourselves: [slow down] Are we doing **enough** to empower our youth and provide them with the education they need to tackle the challenges of tomorrow? [longer pause]

The Legacy of Past Youth Generations

To understand the importance of youth empowerment, we need only look at the *profound impact* young people have had throughout history. [pause] From the civil rights movements of the 1960s to the recent global climate strikes, youth have *consistently* been driving force of social change. These past generations have *shaped* the world we live in today, fighting for equality, human rights, and environmental protection.

Their legacy reminds us that when we empower our youth, we unlock a *powerful force* for positive change. [pause] It's a testament to the fact that age is *not* a prerequisite for wisdom or impact. [pause]

Youth Empowerment in Politics

As we look towards 2030 and beyond, it is clear that we need *fresh perspectives* and *innovative solutions* in our political systems. [pause] Youth involvement in politics is not just beneficial – it's *essential*. [emphasize] Young people bring new ideas, tech-savvy approaches, and a sense of *urgency* to political discourse.

We *must* create pathways for youth participation in politics at all levels – from local councils to national parliaments. [pause] We must promote the appointment of young mps to cabinet position and other key positions of state. The Armenian parliament is truly commendable in this respect, being presently the world's youngest Parliament with an average age of 40. We must also ensure that young voices are heard and respected in all aspects of policy-making processes by promoting the creation of impactful youth advisory boards at national levels to ensure proper consultation on key government policies that will impact them directly.

The Environmental Imperative

The next generation will inherit a planet facing *unprecedented* environmental challenges. [pause] Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution are not distant threats – they are *present realities* that will shape the future of our youth. [pause]

But herein lies an opportunity. [pause] The passion and determination of young climate activists around the world have already begun to shift the global

conversation. [pause] As we approach 2030, it will be the *innovative ideas* and *relentless advocacy* of our youth that drive the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.

We must support this generation of environmental stewards by integrating climate education into our curricula and providing platforms for *youth-led* environmental initiatives. [pause]

Evolving Education for the Future of Work

2030 is also the date presumed for the achievement of Artificial General Intelligence, which will take AI beyond the capability and complexity of human reasoning.

As we race towards 2030, developments in the fields of artificial intelligence will bring constant transformative changes across all sectors of society, from health care to education, from climate science to economic planning.

What does this mean for the younger generations?

As most of the jobs of 2030 and beyond *do not even exist yet*, our education systems *must imperatively constantly evolve* to adequately prepare our youth for the **near** future.

It is essential that our system of education moves beyond the rote learning model, that is the process of learning through memorizing information based on repetition, to, focus instead on *critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability*. We must modernize our curricula, and leverage technology to create more equitable and effective learning environments. We must also promote life-long learning and foster a culture of innovation. Our aim must be to ensure that our young workforce is equipped with the necessary skills to thrive in the new economy. [pause]

Mauritius and Small Island Developing States

Mauritius, like other small island developing states with no known natural resources, face unique challenges. Despite being one of the least polluting countries globally, we top the charts as the most vulnerable countries impacted by climate change. This is a problem not of our making, but yet we bear most its brunt, this climate injustice is unfortunately the reality that we live in.

Our beaches and ocean, which are the backbone of our tourism and fishing industries are under incredible threat from climate change. The disappearance of our coral reefs by 2050 with the rising sea temperatures and by extension the disappearance of our sea life, not to mention changing currents which is destroying our beaches, is the reality with which we are faced with. These

industries account for a quarter of our economy, both in terms of revenue and employment.

Climate change is already impacting on our daily lives, with more frequent unpredictable climate events such as flash floods and severe tropical cyclones. In fact in this year alone, our students have faced significant disruptions, having been forced to remain at home for an unprecedented number of days due to heavy rain warnings and risks of flash floods.

Although Mauritius has already made significant strides in education and youth development. **It is simply not enough**, in the face of climate change.

What does this mean for us?

It means we must heavily invest in education, technology, and innovation to ensure our survival beyond 2050. However, we lack the financial resources to do so comprehensively.

Small island developing states like Mauritius should not be expected to drive green policies alone but should be encouraged and supported in their effort to mitigate risks of climate change, which requires massive investments in building resilience and adapted infrastructures. We should also be encouraged and supported in our efforts to adapt to climate change, by embracing technology to enhance our education and to diversify our industries to secure the future of the younger generation.

Our people are and will continue to be our greatest resource.

We are an educated and bilingual people, but sadly, this is no longer sufficient in an age of rapid technological advancement. Like Singapore, Mauritius as a modern and stable jurisdiction, also has the potential to become a world class leader in industries such as in the financial services industry, for the benefit of the global economy. Mauritius and other small island developing states can make significant contributions to the world. Our voice matters.

To unlock our potential and secure our very survival post 2050 however, we cannot do it on our own. The solution lies in mutual cooperation and meaningful support to strengthen our physical and digital infrastructures, to enable us to mitigate and adapt to climate change both in terms of protection of our population and protection of our economies. Assistance for the modernisation of our schools, should be a top priority for those who contribute the most to global warming. As young leaders, those present here today hold the key to our future. I have no doubt that you will do what it takes to secure the future of SIDS like Mauritius.

Thank You