

Remarks of Congressman Donald M. Payne
Keynote Address – 118th Assembly of the IPU in Cape Town
April 13, 2008

Distinguished Members of Parliament, delegates, and observers, it is indeed an honor and a sincere pleasure to address the 118th Assembly of the Interparliamentary Union – which I have been told is the largest gathering of parliamentarians ever.

Let me first thank President of the Republic of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, Speaker Mbete President of the ANC, Jacob Zuma, and the entire South African Parliament for an absolutely spectacular inaugural ceremony and reception last night.

I extend my gratitude to President Cassini, -- who I understand could not be here with us -- and to the Acting President, to Secretary-General Anders Johnsson, for inviting me, and to Ambassador Anda Filip for ensuring I could be here to address the Assembly.

My leader -- the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi -- was invited to address this session and while she could not be here with us, she sends her greetings. As you know, in January 2007 she became the first woman to be elected Speaker of the House in the history of the United States.

According to the U.S. Constitution, Speaker Pelosi is second in line in presidential succession after the vice president. She strongly believes, as I do, that women's empowerment is critical to the success of any democracy and she has done an excellent job as head of the Congress.

I regret that I will not be able to stay for the duration of the Assembly. Speaker Pelosi granted me leave from votes on Monday, which I will miss because of my being here, on the condition that I be back in Washington on Tuesday morning to ensure the Democrats lose no critical votes due to my absence. I am sure many of you can relate to my dilemma.

I have been asked to address you, my fellow parliamentarians from nearly 140 countries, on the Assembly's theme - ***Pushing Back the Frontiers of Poverty*** - from a U.S. perspective. As Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health in the Foreign Affairs Committee, I confront the issue of poverty regularly and consult partners throughout Africa to gain insight into lasting solutions. This morning, allow me to share with you my views on the subject, as I invite you to give me your feedback in the coming months.

The first of the 8 Millennium Development Goals agreed to by United Nations member states in 2000 is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. As you know, we must do much more to meet this goal because we are lagging behind.

Half the world, nearly 3 billion people, lives on less than \$2 a day. In an era when globalization is increasing at rates that make one's head spin, the rich are getting richer, and the poor are becoming more impoverished. More than 80% of the world's people live in countries where the income differentials are widening; the richest 20% account for three quarters of world income.

We know children are the most vulnerable to the ravages of poverty – UNICEF reports that between 26,000 and 30,000 of the world's children die each day due to poverty's causes. And poverty enables disease, hunger and malnutrition, lack of education, conflict, and hopelessness. By the same token, these things reinforce poverty, especially conflict and instability.

But there is hope. Certainly, in a world where there is such wealth, there is the hope that there may be a more equal distribution of it. But it requires a serious commitment by all of us, especially in wealthy nations.

We as parliamentarians have a particular responsibility to represent and champion our constituents and fight for the issues that affect them. In terms of poverty, this means many things. We must challenge the power of our central governments when they are not acting in the interest of reducing poverty. Parliamentarians in new and emerging democracies, here in Africa and elsewhere, must work particularly hard to confront the power and authority of their central governments. This is especially difficult in burgeoning countries coming out of the grips of dictatorial rule. But it is something that must be done.

The work of the IPU is of great help to this cause, as it is a forum where ideas and best practices can be shared and adopted to new contexts and situations. Parliamentarians must support one another in this respect.

Beyond dealing with the executive powers in one's country, parliamentarians must always keep one ear to the ground to clearly and accurately identify the needs of the people and to communicate this in government.

Those in developing nations must ensure their central governments are communicating these needs to donor nations so that assistance comes in the right forms and goes to the areas where it is needed, rather than where partnering nations would like to see it.

For many years, there was criticism of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) because aid was often ill-placed or was not tied into the development priorities of the countries on the receiving end. More recently, the U.S. established the Millennium Challenge Account which works with governments of some of the poorest nations, to provide hefty assistance grants called "compacts" in areas identified by the countries themselves.

While the conditions are difficult to meet – a series of specific indicators in the areas of ruling justly, investing in people, and open markets -- the rewards can be great. Nine of

the 16 compacts signed so far have been with African nations. The most recent compact is also the largest so far -- a \$698 million agreement with Tanzania to reduce poverty and stimulate economic growth by increasing household incomes through targeted investments in transportation, energy, and water.

The other 8 African compacts are with Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, and Mozambique.

We are also increasing investments to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS. Three weeks ago, the House, led by my committee, approved the Global AIDS bill which authorizes \$50 billion to fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria over the next 5 years. The bill reauthorizes the program known as PEPFAR (the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) a 5 year program supported by President Bush funded at \$15 billion in 2003, at the new level of \$50 billion. We are excited about the three-fold increase.

At the urging of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, I offered an amendment to our Foreign Operations Appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2008 to provide increased assistance to fight the emerging extensively drug-resistant Tuberculosis or XDR-TB. The Archbishop's letter to me last year described the co-infection of TB and HIV and the case at a KwaZulu Natal hospital where 52 of 53 people with XDR-TB died within 16 days of contracting the TB strain. They were all living with AIDS.

Poverty and disease go hand in hand. We cannot fight poverty without simultaneously fighting disease.

Another issue which must be dealt with if we are to reduce poverty is Climate Change and its disproportionate impact on the continent. An assessment report of an intergovernmental panel says that desertification in Africa is increasing significantly and will continue to do so. Water is becoming scarce – it is a global crisis. This is but one effect of climate change. Changing weather patterns as a result of greenhouse gases – produced mainly by the West, particularly the US and Europe – are causing increased droughts and severe rains.

We know all too well the rising costs of food are having a disastrous impact on the poor and hungry all over the world, particularly in Africa. We all must mitigate and adapt now. Industrialized nations must accept our responsibility, rapidly put forth resources to help poor nations adapt, and develop strategies to drastically halt the rate of climate change. We must tackle this head-on.

Finally, fair trade must be used to increase market access to products from African nations. In my opinion, this can only successfully be done with the elimination of protectionist Western nation subsidies – which total more than \$3 billion annually -- and efforts to build and strengthen capacity of African farmers.

As was said earlier, trade is the wave of the future. We must work together to extend and expand the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to go beyond oil and apparel,

and do more to support agricultural development through infrastructure development. Agricultural development should reach the point where countries are producing enough food to feed their populations and stock reserves for times of shortage.

In order to make a real difference we need a holistic, long-term approach, which means building up of economic infrastructures within African countries that will facilitate inter-regional trade. Again, if structured fairly, trade can be a means for countries in Africa, the Caribbean and other regions to reduce poverty and more evenly distribute wealth.

In the U.S. Congress I am a member of the House Democracy Assistance Commission, which some of you may be aware of. Established in 2005, the Commission works through peer-to-peer partnerships with emerging democratic legislatures to assist in the development of the fundamental building blocks of legislative government: oversight, transparency, accountability, effective legislation, and responsiveness to constituents.

I hope to work with many of you in the future, through the Democracy Assistance Commission, and other means. Through these strategic partnerships, we can help meet the Millennium Development Goal and push back the frontiers of poverty.

Advancements in technology and communications provide a unique opportunity for us to use in today's world to find new ways to improve quality of life for all the world's people.

Again, this was a real honor for me to address you. Thank you for inviting me to join you. I wish you a very fruitful and successful session.