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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(d) Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean

***Meeting the SDGs while reducing inequalities in and among countries:
The role of parliaments***

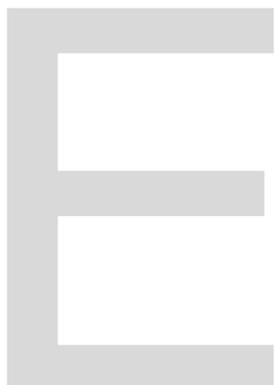
Panama City (Panama), 1 and 2 December 2016

About 120 MPs from the Parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Panama City on 1 and 2 December at a Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Seminar was organized by the IPU in cooperation with the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino). It provided a platform for exchanging ideas about the opportunities and challenges of achieving the SDGs. The MPs discussed how parliaments can effectively engage in policymaking to enable the SDGs to be implemented in the region and their own countries. Particular emphasis was placed on economic, social and environmental inequalities and how they impede progress towards sustainable development.

The starting point of the discussion was SDG 16. It highlights that to achieve sustainable development, it is important to strive for good governance, effective and accountable institutions, inclusion, participation, human rights, peace and security. Participants therefore discussed ways to strengthen the rule of law. They also considered how to mainstream and institutionalize the SDGs so as to harness synergies and ensure coherence in all public policy work.

The debates focused on five main themes: (1) the role of parliaments in achieving the SDGs; (2) governance and partnership for the SDGs; (3) the impact of inequalities on sustainable development; (4) gender equality as a critical factor for sustainable development; and (5) and promoting income equity through political change. The IPU Self-Assessment Toolkit on the SDGs was launched at the Seminar and immediately triggered a lot of interest among parliamentarians.

Participants identified a number of strategies, actions and recommendations to advance national and regional parliamentary engagement with the SDGs. They are outlined in the outcome document that was adopted at the end of the Seminar (see [Annex](#)).



#IPU136



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Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean



Panama City, 1-2 December 2016

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

We, members of parliament from Latin America and the Caribbean gathered in Panama City, Panama, on 1 and 2 December 2016 for a regional seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The seminar was jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (Parlatino).

We discussed how parliaments could effectively engage in policymaking to facilitate the implementation of the SDGs and promote specific actions to reduce inequalities and gender-based disparities in and among countries. We emphasized the crucial role that parliaments play in advancing the integration of the SDGs into all public policy work and in monitoring national progress. The Seminar provided a valuable platform for exchanging ideas about the opportunities and challenges associated with achieving the SDGs.

We welcomed the launch of the IPU/UNDP self-assessment toolkit for parliaments on the SDGs. It will help us assess the extent to which parliaments are fit for the purpose of supporting SDG implementation in our respective countries.

The starting point of our discussion was SDG 16. It highlights that, to achieve sustainable development it is important to strive for good governance, effective and accountable institutions, inclusion, participation, human rights, peace and security. We therefore discussed ways to strengthen the rule of law as well as to mainstream and institutionalize the SDGs so as to capture synergies and build coherence in all public policy work.

Our debates focused on five main themes: (1) the role of parliaments in achieving the SDGs; (2) governance and partnership for the SDGs; (3) the impact of inequalities on sustainable development; (4) gender equality as a critical factor for sustainable development; and (5) the promotion of income equity through political change.

We identified the following strategies, actions and recommendations to advance national and regional parliamentary engagement with the SDGs:

- Parliamentarians should work across party lines to build political ownership and will to implement the SDGs in their countries. Parliaments should play an active role in creating opportunities for dialogue with key stakeholders, including citizens, civil society and academia. Those opportunities will create the necessary momentum for achieving the goals. As a first step in this direction, each parliament should consider adopting a parliamentary resolution on the SDGs. The IPU model parliamentary resolution on SDG follow-up can be used to inspire action.
- Parliaments should fully discharge all their functions to help translate the SDGs into their own national reality. Parliaments should call for national sustainable development strategies to be developed in an inclusive manner with the participation of key stakeholders, including young people, children and women' organizations. These strategies should reflect national needs and inspire action at the local level where it matters most.

- The national development strategy should be gender sensitive. It should add to existing commitments on gender equality, expressed through the Beijing Platform for Action and the Istanbul Convention, and should include gender-disaggregated indicators. Both male and female parliamentarians should advocate this approach.
- Each parliament should find effective ways to hold their government to account for implementing the SDGs at the national level. In doing so, parliaments should define frameworks to be able to periodically monitor government action. That monitoring should include gender mainstreaming and take account of the needs of young sections of the population, thereby encouraging accountability at all levels. Data availability should be improved to enable parliaments to fully play their part in accountability for the SDGs.
- Budget allocations for the sustainable development strategy will be critical to success. Parliaments should make sure that national commitments and sustainable development priorities are reflected in budgets and that those budgets are gender sensitive. This may require an entirely new approach to fiscal and tax policy, as well as incentives for more sustainable production and consumption.
- Strong economic growth in our region has contributed to an unprecedented reduction in poverty and an increase in prosperity at all levels of society. However, as our economies slow down, it is critical that parliaments take proactive steps to build on what we have already gained. We should continue to make strides toward shared prosperity, paying particular attention to the income, employment and other economic needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable.
- In addition to economic inequality, social inequalities have a strong impact on health and access to health services in our region. In order to minimize this impact, parliamentarians need to understand the social determinants of health in their communities and in society at large. Equally importantly, parliamentarians must lead by example and work closely with their constituents to address stigma and discrimination that often stand in the way of better health outcomes for the most marginalized.
- Climate change and natural disasters increasingly impact our economies and the life of the people in our region. Many people are therefore forced to leave their homes and migrate. Migration further exacerbates existing social and economic inequalities, particularly among women and girls. Parliaments should not overlook these phenomena, as they take action to tackle inequalities and achieve the SDGs for all.
- All parliaments should use the SDG self-assessment toolkit in order to mainstream the SDGs into their work and functioning. They should make sure that national policies and plans comprehensively reflect the needs of all citizens, including those at the social and economic margins. No goal should be met unless it is met for everyone.
- We recognize that regional cooperation can play an important supportive role in achieving the SDGs in Latin America and the Caribbean. We pledge to promote and advocate for strong regional inter-parliamentary cooperation on the SDGs, as well as for the promotion and development of joint initiatives between parliaments.

In order to inspire action on the SDGs, we will bring this Outcome Document to the attention of our Parliaments and other relevant stakeholders.

We encourage the IPU and Parlatino to work together to track, monitor and evaluate progress, so that exchanges and experiences from regional and national parliamentary engagement with the SDGs can feed into the global level and encourage further progress. We urge them to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community.

We request that the IPU and Parlatino explore options for our parliaments to reconvene again to examine progress on the SDGs and the role parliaments are playing in their implementation.