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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(c) Regional Seminar on climate change and disaster risk reduction for the Parliaments of the Caribbean

Paramaribo, Suriname, 5-6 November 2018

The IPU and the National Assembly of Suriname organized the first ever Regional Seminar on climate change and disaster risk reduction for the Parliaments of the Caribbean on 5 and 6 November 2018 at the Ballroom of the Torarica Royal Hotel, Paramaribo, Suriname.

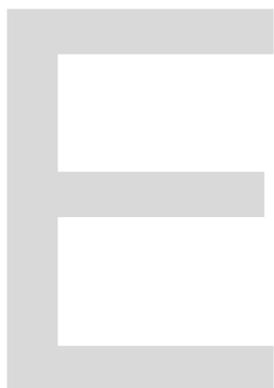
The event was attended by four Speakers and close to 35 members of parliament from 10 countries: Aruba, Barbados, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Suriname. The Vice-President of the Republic of Suriname and three Cabinet Ministers attended the opening session.

The Seminar also brought together IPU partners from United Nations Environment, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UN ECLAC), the Grantham Institute and Hawai'i Green, whose experts made presentations on the various topics covered. The event also saw participation by civil society actors, the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

At the conclusion of the two-day Seminar, the participants unanimously adopted the Paramaribo Declaration (see [Annex](#)) in which they urged the IPU to provide them with customized capacity-building training based on the specificities of small island developing States (SIDS) and to organize regional and national follow-up seminars to continue the work that had been started.

The Declaration places special emphasis on preserving and replanting mangroves—a common feature of all SIDS—and the need to hold the largest polluters to account for the dramatic and devastating effects of climate change experienced today.

The participants also went on a field trip to a coastal area outside Paramaribo severely affected by erosion to get a first-hand view of the damage.



#IPU140



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Regional Seminar on climate change and disaster risk reduction for Parliaments of the Caribbean

Paramaribo, 5-6 November 2018



Paramaribo Declaration on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

*Presented by the Rapporteur of the Regional Seminar, Hon. Dr. B. Scotland,
Speaker of the National Assembly of Guyana*

We, parliamentarians from the Caribbean, have gathered in Paramaribo, Suriname, on 5 and 6 November 2018, for the Regional Seminar on climate change and disaster risk reduction for Parliaments of the Caribbean. The seminar was jointly organized by the National Assembly of Suriname and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). We are grateful to the National Assembly of Suriname for hosting the event and receiving us with warm hospitality.

The Seminar addressed the challenges posed by climate change and the role that parliamentarians can play to address this issue, especially in the Caribbean region. We discussed how crucial it is to tackle this challenge and how national parliaments can take concrete actions, particularly in the form of legislation, to respond to climate change, reduce the risks of natural disaster and fulfil relevant international commitments. The seminar placed special emphasis on the initiatives for adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction adopted by us, parliamentarians from the Caribbean. We also discussed implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change through national laws and corresponding budget allocations.

We commended the IPU Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change, which provides us with strategic guidance about measures to devise and implement disaster risk reduction policies, environmental legislation and full implementation of the Paris Agreement at the national level. We learnt about recent developments in the international climate change regime and gained a better understanding of what is being done in the region, at the parliamentary level, to combat climate change and tackle natural disasters. We acknowledged the importance of parliamentary cooperation and exchange of experiences and committed to continue learning from each other and exchanging with fellow parliamentarians from the region and the world.

We also conducted a field visit to the Commenwijnne coastal area in Suriname, where adaptive measures to counter the effects of climate change are currently being implemented. This visit provided us with concrete examples of feasible solutions that can mitigate and prevent climate change effects.

We proactively engaged in the discussions and agreed to take further action to address climate change and implement more effective disaster risk reduction policies at national level. With this in mind, we agreed on the following:

- All national plans and policies need to be developed in consultation with citizens - women and men alike - so that they reflect their real needs and expectations. Special attention should be given to identifying and including in the consultations young people, vulnerable groups and hard-to-reach populations so as to ensure that follow-up actions leave no one behind.
- Parliaments should ensure that legislation on climate change and disaster risk reduction involves a comprehensive and synergistic approach; taking into account the specific national conditions and circumstances and strict respect for human rights. Priority should be given to adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures in national plans, with a particular focus on conserving and replanting mangroves as a proven technique, which helps to protect coastal communities and environments by reducing the impact of strong waves and erosion.

- Each parliament should identify effective ways to hold government to account for national strategies and policies aimed at combating climate change and reducing disaster risk. Parliaments should increase their use of oversight mechanisms, such as parliamentary hearings, question times and plenary reports to assess the impact of government policies and programmes through a collaborative approach.
- Without concrete responses, climate change could place populations at risk, endanger household and government revenues and increase poverty, thereby causing social fragility and further inequalities. All these factors need to be taken into account in relevant legislation and programmes.
- Climate change presents a serious threat to human health and well-being. It can affect health not only through direct natural hazards such as floods and hurricanes, but also through more complex consequences such as communicable diseases, food insecurity and internal displacement.
- Parliaments should take more robust and concerted actions to respond to climate change by optimizing their legislative and oversight roles, and also by enhancing cooperation and partnership in order to share information and experiences on the regional and global levels. Active participation in the existing regional and global parliamentary networks on climate change and disaster risk reduction will help us to further develop our capacities and take collective action.
- Disaster risk and environmental degradation present important challenges to our region. Disaster risk reduction and environmental protection therefore need to be part and parcel of the parliamentary engagement on climate change and national education programmes. Parliaments need to ensure that legislation protects the environment and that prevention measures are included in the budget to avert the impact of climate change and natural disasters.
- The SIDS Parliaments of the Caribbean and other regions should form a strong coalition in order to make their voices heard and have greater impact on the international arena. The IPU should devise customized capacity-building programmes to cater to their specific needs.
- Regional and global action mechanisms should be established and implemented in order to ensure effective action by the world's largest polluters in order to substantially decrease their disproportionate greenhouse gas emissions to the extent and within the timeframe indicated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

In order to turn words into action, we will bring this Declaration to the attention of our parliamentary peers through all possible channels and urge the IPU to do so too. We also undertake to bring it to the attention of other relevant stakeholders, including governments, civil society and the private sector, and agree to organize follow-up regional seminars, under IPU auspices, on a regular basis to take stock of progress made in this field.

As a unique platform for parliamentary dialogue and cooperation at global level, we urge the IPU to continue promoting parliamentary engagement in combating climate change and reducing disaster risk and to help facilitate the creation of spaces for parliamentary exchange in this domain. We request the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community at the 140th IPU Assembly in Doha.