



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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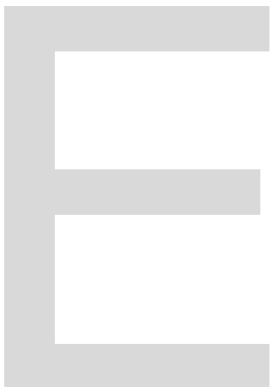
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Advancing the agenda of previous World Speakers' Conferences

(c) Parliaments and the 2030 Development Agenda

1. The adoption in 2015 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development signaled an increasingly coherent international vision of sustainable development. Together they seek to move away from the siloed approaches and individual sector goals that characterized the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) era to a more integrated and mutually interdependent landscape. Having created this new international framework, the next challenge is to implement these agreements in a coherent way at the national level.
2. The 2030 Agenda was adopted in September 2015 as the most important UN declaration on the world's many economic, social and environmental challenges. At its core lie 17 SDGs, articulated in 169 targets, designed to eradicate extreme poverty and drastically reduce other forms of deprivation and inequality while setting the planet on a sustainable course.
3. The SDGs constitute an integrated framework in which progress on each goal is dependent on the advancement of all the other goals. The framework applies to all countries, developed and developing alike, requiring them to take action in their own domestic jurisdictions as well as together through international cooperation. The SDGs reflect a solid human rights perspective and a common vision of the future that all countries can aspire to.
4. The IPU participated actively in the negotiations for the SDGs through parliamentary consultations followed by advocacy before the relevant UN committees and other forums. As a result, paragraph 45 of the 2030 Agenda acknowledges specifically the role of parliaments in supporting the implementation of the goals through legislation and government oversight. As part of the Friends of Governance for Sustainable Development group at the United Nations, the IPU helped secure a strong commitment to "effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels", which includes parliaments, as part of Goal 16.
5. Endorsed by all UN Member States, the SDGs are globally owned and expectations from their implementation are high. The goals will not come to fruition without strong political will and citizen action. Parliaments and parliamentarians need to be at the forefront of this effort. Despite limited resources, the IPU is doing all it can on its own, as well as in partnership with the UN, to support the implementation of the SDGs through the world's parliaments.



IPU work on the SDGs

6. Having embraced the 2030 Agenda and attendant SDGs from the very beginning, the IPU has since worked to integrate the SDGs in its 2017-2021 Strategy, ensuring that all work is consistent with or directly supportive of the SDGs.

7. The IPU strategy takes a two-pronged approach: it seeks to help parliaments institutionalize the SDGs as an indivisible framework; at the same time, the strategy pursues specific actions to support those goals that are most relevant to the work of the IPU or where the IPU has a comparative advantage, such as SDG 3 on health, SDG 5 on gender equality, SDG 13 on climate change, SDG 16 on governance, and SDG 17 on means of implementation (development cooperation). (See Annex for more information on IPU work on these specific goals.)

8. The action line on institutionalization aims ultimately at making parliaments "fit for purpose", i.e., ensuring that parliaments have the right institutional, legal, technical and policy-making tools to perform their legislative, oversight and representative role with regard to the SDGs. This is done through self-assessment and with the help of a dedicated IPU/UNDP toolkit. This approach has helped a number of parliaments (Fiji, Georgia, Mali, Serbia, etc.) come up with a multi-year parliamentary action plan on the SDGs. The self-assessment approach to the SDGs is consistent with the IPU's overarching democracy-building mission.

9. As the under-representation of women and youth in decision-making and economic opportunity continues to be one of the main stumbling blocks to progress on sustainable development and peace, much of IPU's work on the SDGs today incorporates a gender and youth perspective. This includes mainstreaming gender equality, women's rights and youth needs and interests in project work by spotlighting their particular needs and advocating for corresponding policy reforms.

10. The underlying objective of IPU's work on the SDGs is to empower parliaments so that they:

- Are fully equipped in terms of internal structures and processes to identify and support the SDG policies that are right for their respective countries;
- Ensure that a national SDG plan localizing the global goals is in place and that all government policies are commensurate with each country's sustainable development challenges;
- Provide for adequate budgetary allocations and other means of implementation that are needed to advance the national SDGs plan;
- Actively engage with all citizens, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, to promote the SDGs and garner feedback on the implementation of the national SDGs plan.

11. At the operational level, IPU's work on the SDGs takes different forms, from the organization of national and regional seminars, the publication of guidance notes and toolkits to the adoption of SDG-related resolutions and the organization of specialized panel discussions at IPU assemblies. Well over 100 parliaments have been involved in IPU's SDGs activities around the world so far. Overall, these activities help bring home to MPs that the SDGs are not an abstract agenda detached from their everyday reality but are in fact aligned with national development objectives of both developed and developing countries.

12. In addition, the IPU works to connect parliaments to UN processes designed to monitor progress toward the SDGs at national and global levels and to maintain the political momentum for the 2030 Agenda. Key among these processes is the UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development that meets annually at the ministerial level and every four years at the head of State level. In addition to reviewing a number of UN reports on the SDGs and discussing challenges and future course corrections, the HLPF hosts a number of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Countries participating in VNRs are expected to review their own progress in consultation with parliaments, civil society organizations and other stakeholders and present their findings to the HLPF.

13. Among the many actions of the IPU to keep the spotlight on the SDGs, the following should be highlighted:

- Each spring session of the IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs is dedicated to a review of parliamentary actions for the SDGs and to a discussion of the main theme of that year's forthcoming HLPF session;

- In preparation for the VNRs for the HLPF session, the IPU notifies the relevant parliaments of the process and asks them to report back (by way of a questionnaire) on their involvement throughout the relevant period. Some of the reports to the HLPF have been jointly presented by representatives of government and parliament;
- A parliamentary event is held at each HLPF to highlight the main points of the session and encourage further parliamentary engagement going forward;
- On the basis of a parliamentary self-assessment toolkit prepared with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the IPU helps national parliaments to improve their own legislative and oversight capacities for the SDGs (parliaments as diverse as those of Djibouti, Fiji, and Serbia have made use of this toolkit to date). Some parliaments, like the National Assembly of Viet Nam and the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, have translated the toolkit into the local language.

Scorecard and lessons learned

14. The SDG scorecard that the United Nations and associated research organizations prepare each year presents a mixed view indicating slow progress overall. Currently, no country is on track toward achieving *all* of the SDGs. While many countries are making significant progress on several SDGs, at the same time, other countries are backsliding or stagnating on more than one of the SDGs.

15. Globally, while extreme poverty is trending down, inequality is stuck at very high levels, hunger is on the rise, biodiversity and basic ecosystems are losing their regenerating capacity, the global climate is changing much faster than expected, and key institutions of democracy are under severe threat, resulting in growing social unrest and conflict. On the more positive side, there are encouraging signs of decreasing discrimination against women in some areas, improved health and education, more access to electricity, and less unemployment. A comprehensive picture of progress and setbacks globally and by country is provided in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018 (<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2018/TheSustainableDevelopmentGoalsReport2018-EN.pdf>) and the 2018 SDG Index and Dashboards of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (<http://www.sdgindex.org/reports/2018/>).

16. By definition, developed countries have the advantage and several of them are not far from achieving most of the SDGs. However, the headline SDG score of many developed countries may be lower when their "spillover effects" over developing countries are factored in. These effects (e.g., the impact of CO₂ emissions on developing countries or of lax tax laws that allow for tax evasion) end up impacting developing countries that retard their own development.

17. Generally speaking, developing countries are facing greater challenges in delivering actual results although their political commitment to the SDGs may be relatively stronger than in developed countries. The main reasons for the slower progress of developing countries come down to lack of resources, low implementation capacities (including for data collection and analysis), weaker governance, and a higher incidence of internal or external conflict.

18. From IPU's direct experience with the SDGs and parliaments the following key lessons can be drawn:

- Generally, it can be said that parliaments are much more aware of and demonstrate greater ownership of the SDGs than of their predecessor—the MDGs. This is owing to the wide-ranging consultations on SDGs content and the subsequent work of the IPU and other organizations to raise awareness of the goals in parliaments.
- There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to the institutionalization of the SDGs in parliaments. Some parliaments have set up dedicated SDGs committees or informal caucuses whereas others have assigned specific SDGs to existing portfolio committees. Most parliaments have yet to consider how to go about making sure that all of the SDGs have a clear landing place in their committee structure.
- Parliamentary oversight of the SDGs needs to be greatly strengthened. This is made most evident by the results of the annual survey of parliaments in the VNRs which show that no more than a third of parliaments from countries submitting their VNRs contributed in some way to the development of the report.

- Regional parliamentary cooperation is very important. Virtually all regional seminars that the IPU has organized over the last three years have shown the benefit of parliaments, at roughly similar levels of development, coming together to exchange best practices and generally support each other.
- Access to quality data disaggregated by gender, minority status, age, regional area and other such categories is needed to help parliaments make informed policy decisions. Many parliaments, particularly in developing countries, lack access to independent data which can help them hold government to account.

19. Looking towards the process ahead, the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament represents a key opportunity to further engage parliaments in the SDGs at the highest political level. Members of the Preparatory Committee are invited to consider the following questions:

- (a) How can parliaments make sure the SDGs deliver for all citizens, including the most marginalized and vulnerable such as women, youth and people with disabilities?
- (b) What are the biggest challenges in achieving the SDGs in countries and regions?
- (c) In what way can Parliament help overcome those challenges?
- (d) How can the IPU further assist parliaments in engaging with SDGs implementation?

IPU WORK ON SPECIFIC SDGS: MAIN ACTION LINES

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

The IPU focuses on health as an area that cuts across all SDGs and whose impact on the lives of the people is most strongly felt. The 2017-2021 IPU Strategy recognizes the right to health as a basic human right and universal access to good quality health care as critical to ending extreme poverty and promoting development. In accordance with the SDG call to "leave no one behind", the IPU aims to strengthen parliaments' capacity to take action on universal health coverage and health with particular attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized populations, including women, children, adolescents, and people affected by HIV/AIDS. The work on health is supported by the IPU Advisory Group on Health, which serves as a global parliamentary focal point for health-related legislative work, and is carried out in cooperation with key international partners, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

In 2012, through the IPU, parliaments adopted the landmark resolution *Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children*. At the last IPU Assembly in October 2018, the IPU Member Parliaments reiterated their commitment to health by deciding to develop a resolution in 2019, on achieving Universal Health Coverage by 2030 and the role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health. The IPU President is a member of the UN Secretary General-led Every Woman Every Child High-Level Steering Group. At the national level, IPU support has included capacity building on accountability and budgeting for health, recommendations on defining new legislation, and promotion of community outreach. As a result of this engagement, stronger parliamentary action on health in countries, such as Bangladesh, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, has led to the adoption of new legislation on reproductive health, increased budget allocations for health, and improved oversight on maternal, newborn and child health.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

In the framework of its Gender Partnership Programme, the IPU works to advance implementation of SDG 5 titled "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Gender equality is one of the IPU's strategic objectives. IPU data on women in parliament serves as an indicator for target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

The IPU programmatic work on gender equality and women and girls' empowerment, focuses on increasing women's presence and influence in parliament, supporting parliaments in becoming more gender-sensitive institutions that advance equality between men and women in their composition, organization and functioning, and assisting parliaments in delivering on gender equality and women's rights through their legislative, oversight, representation and budgetary functions and decisions.

To do so, the IPU carries out research that provides comparative data, information and good practices to inform advocacy efforts carried out worldwide to enhance women's participation and influence in parliament. It supports parliaments in promoting women's access to political office, including through expert advice for electoral reforms and the introduction of gender quotas as well as through supporting parliament's efforts to promote a conducive environment at country level for the election of women. It also provides support to the establishment and good functioning of caucuses of women parliamentarians and runs tailored training programmes for newly elected women parliamentarians. The IPU also supports parliaments in domesticating international and regional commitments made to advance women's rights and gender equality such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). To do so it helps build capacities of men and women MPs and parliamentary staff in identifying and eliminating inequalities and discrimination in law and practice. The IPU also supports parliaments and their men and women members in taking action to combat all forms of violence against women and girls and in putting an end to sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament and in politics.

IPU support is aimed to inform and boost parliamentary action and involvement in the implementation of SDG 5. Furthermore, as gender equality cuts across the realization of all SDGs and is an enabler of success, the support also serves the role of parliaments in implementing all SDGs.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

In March 2016 the IPU Members adopted a *Parliamentary action plan on climate change* in order to scale up action to implement the Paris Agreement. In support of the execution of respective activities, the IPU has established a number of institutional and technical partnerships with some of the key organizations engaged in climate change, including UN Environment (UNEP), the UN Climate Change Secretariat, the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment (GRI), the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) and the Blue Planet Foundation.

IPU's priority has been to enhance political and parliamentary mobilization and advocacy in support of climate change action. This objective has been pursued at IPU Assemblies and at meetings on the occasion of major United Nations conferences on climate change related processes. These meetings have served as powerful platforms to galvanize parliamentary support in favour of climate change action, to strengthen cooperation at all levels, to promote inclusive decision making processes, and to provide platforms for political dialogue.

Acknowledging the importance of the Paris Agreement, IPU's efforts now also include capacity building activities to support legislators to create enabling environments for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and countries' Nationally Determined Contributions. The upcoming IPU/UN Environment background paper for parliamentarians on the green economy will also inform the planned national workshops. One of the main results of the IPU's climate-related work is the adoption of several key IPU Resolutions on the topic, including the latest emergency item resolution *Climate change – Let us not cross the line*.

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

The IPU's strategic objectives, particularly Objective 1 - Build strong, democratic parliaments, are closely intertwined with the SDG 16 and its targets 16.6 (Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels) and 16.7 (Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels).

By setting standards for democratic parliaments, facilitating the SDG self-assessments, developing research and tools, and providing technical support, the IPU assists parliaments to build their institutional capacity and strengthen their key functions. In doing so, it helps parliaments to monitor the work of government and other state institutions, and ensure accountability for commitments undertaken at all levels, which is all in line with SDG 16.

In 2018, the IPU was entrusted by the United Nations with the custodianship for the new SDG indicator 16.7.1 (a) on the proportion of decision-making positions in national parliaments by age and sex. Data gathered by the IPU for this indicator will enable the monitoring of progress between parliaments and over time.

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

This goal captures the most important "means of implementation" that countries need to mobilize in order to effectively advance the 2030 Agenda. It includes targets on finance and trade. For the target on finance, the IPU is working to strengthen parliaments' oversight, legislative and budgetary role with regard to development cooperation, i.e., various forms of financial and non-financial aid from public or private sources. This work includes helping parliaments figure out tax reforms to increase state revenue, ensure optimal use of aid expenditures, and mobilize private sector investments (particularly through public-private partnerships). Our engagement in this area, where more resources are needed, is closely linked to the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC) that the IPU joined in 2011. As a member of the GPEDC, the IPU helps frame the international agenda of development cooperation and monitor the implementation of agreed commitments.

With regard to the trade component of SDG 17, the IPU aims principally at revitalizing the Doha Round of trade negotiations and, in this context, help familiarize parliamentarians with the internal workings of the WTO, making this organization more transparent and inclusive. Together with the European Parliament, the IPU manages the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO which meets regularly to discuss trade issues and engage parliamentarians with trade negotiators.