



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Webinar for the Asia-Pacific Region Parliaments

Building a better future where nobody is left behind: How can parliaments ensure that COVID-19 recovery strategies are in line with the SDGs?

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Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and
the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

2020 was a year of extraordinary challenges in human history. The global population found itself in a situation where multiple crises severely hit the health and socio-economic sectors, and particularly affected people who were already living in vulnerable situations, including poor people, women and children, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the systemic inequalities that still exist in our societies as well as structural vulnerabilities in the world economy. Several wakeup calls have occurred in recent years (e.g. the Ebola epidemic) but the current outbreak showed us that the lessons from the past have not yet been learned. There is an urgent need for a change that radically addresses the imbalances that are still preventing our world from being fully sustainable, fair and equal. Concrete opportunities to trigger a positive change are at hand.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the socio-economic and political landscape of Asia and the Pacific, creating titanic challenges but also presenting new opportunities to “build back better”. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is our guiding light that will lead us along the path to recovery. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must shape our response and recovery, laying the foundations for resilient people and resilient societies.

The 2030 Agenda and its SDGs readily offer a unique framework that can help develop, implement and coordinate policies towards the achievement of inclusive development and the wellbeing of the whole of humanity in a coherent way. Because of their comprehensive and interlinked nature, the SDGs should be the foundation on which to develop COVID-19 recovery strategies that not only address the current global health crisis but also structural fragilities in the health sector, as well as other crucial aspects that are strictly interconnected and dependent, at the economic and environmental levels.

Governments are responsible for the implementation of the SDGs, but their effective realization can only be achieved if all stakeholders are actively engaged. Parliamentarians are instrumental in the realization of the 2030 Agenda through their ability to turn the voluntary commitment to the SDGs into enforceable laws, to hold their governments to account on development policy choices and strategies, and the adoption of national budgets. Parliaments have the obligation to oversee, identify problems and seek corrective measures that will ensure the attainment of the SDGs. Now

that the world has entered the final decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, parliaments must be able to effectively contribute to the implementation of the SDGs by 2030.

The 2020 Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) reflected the fact that the Asia-Pacific region is not on track to achieve the SDGs in the next decade. Although people are wealthier, better nourished and better educated than 15 years ago, the region still has not found a sustainable path. There are signs that environmental systems are near to crossing, or in the process of crossing, thresholds beyond which catastrophic environmental change is expected, due to climate change, plastic waste and environmental degradation. At the same time inequality, unemployment (especially youth unemployment), declines in economic output, livelihood disruptions and demographic change are converging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and reversing the hard-won sustainable development gains in Asia and the Pacific. Deprivation persists in the midst of plenty.

Against this backdrop, the 8th APFSD, the annual, inclusive and intergovernmental forum for the follow-up and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs at the regional level, will be organized on the theme of Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Asia and the Pacific.

Objectives of the webinar

The webinar will provide parliaments with up-to-date information on the status of SDG implementation, as well as recommendations on how to accelerate transformative change in the region and ensure that COVID-19 recovery strategies incorporate the SDG lens. Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff will have a unique space in which to exchange and discuss common challenges as well as strategies that they could implement to promote a green recovery and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by 2030. The discussions will also focus on the importance for parliaments to be engaged in the Voluntary National Reviews process in order to monitor government actions, strengthen national ownership of and build more political support for the SDGs.

Jointly organized by the IPU and the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the webinar is part of a series of IPU regional webinars on SDG implementation in a time of pandemic, and is intended to contribute, by providing parliaments' input, to the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

Participation: The webinar is open to parliaments in the ESCAP Member States: Afghanistan, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, France, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

Languages: The working language will be English.