



First Global Parliamentary Meeting on Achieving the SDGs

**Turning the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic into opportunities
for parliaments to achieve the SDGs**

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and
the House of Representatives of Indonesia

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

We, parliamentarians from over 55 countries and 4 international and regional parliamentary organizations, gathered virtually at the First Global Parliamentary Meeting on Achieving the SDGs, entitled *Turning the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic into opportunities for parliaments to achieve the SDGs*.

The Global Meeting provided us with the opportunity to discuss how we can advance SDG implementation through innovative action and cooperation, exchange ideas, discuss the challenges and opportunities to strengthen actions and, importantly, recommit to doing our utmost to achieve the goals. We welcomed the active engagement of all participants as they shared their valuable experiences, lessons learned and views, and benefited from the precious contributions of parliamentarians, experts from the United Nations, the IPU, universities, international advocacy groups, development banks and Supreme Audit Institutions.

With only nine years left until the 2030 deadline for the SDGs, strengthening our commitment, action and cooperation to achieve sustainable solutions has become crucial. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, parliaments have engaged in multiple ways to implement its Global Goals, including through the IPU. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, progress has been stalled and often reversed. Governments are the main actors responsible for the implementation of the SDGs, but their effective realization can only be achieved if all stakeholders are actively engaged. Important concrete steps need to be taken to deliver on our collective promise for a sustainable future.

The commitments made at the 132nd IPU Assembly through the Hanoi Declaration (The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action) remain valid and need to be kept. Parliaments should be at the heart of transformational change to achieve the SDGs and should also be at the heart of the national and global response to COVID-19, as the two are closely connected. Both responses should take account of the need to protect and promote the wellbeing of the people and the planet.

We note with satisfaction the fact that parliaments have pursued their work to implement the SDGs despite the numerous challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These actions could certainly contribute to the implementation of the SDGs at the national, regional and global levels, but we should do more if we want to protect future generations.

Our debates focused on some of the key issues that are determining progress on SDG implementation: the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, inequalities, universal health coverage and health emergency preparedness, economic transformation and SDG financing.

We proactively engaged on these issues and drew up the following strategies, actions and recommendations to advance parliamentary engagement with the SDGs:

Parliaments should demonstrate their commitment to sustainable and inclusive development by creating further opportunities to institutionalize the SDGs as an indivisible framework in all areas of their work. The

SDGs will not be realized without institutional support and the involvement of all parliamentarians. All political parties should support the integration of the SDG framework into all areas of their work.

Parliaments should enact laws that take into consideration the needs and specificities of all segments of society, especially those that are in marginalized and vulnerable situations. Women, indigenous people, migrants and minorities are some of the main groups that should be particularly taken into consideration, especially when assessing the impact of policies and legislation. Disparities and intersecting forms of discrimination could hamper equitable development outcomes and affect the speed of recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Parliaments should make sure that legislation supports the implementation of the national sustainable development strategy and the SDGs. Each parliament should devise a methodology to make laws compatible with the SDGs and to ensure that their interconnectedness is duly taken into consideration. Each goal is in fact dependent on the advancement of all the other goals. For example, policies to combat poverty should address all dimensions of the problem – such as existing inequalities, lack of education, poor health, etc. – and not only the economic aspects.

Each parliament should find effective ways to hold government accountable for the goals to which they have subscribed. In doing so, parliaments should define frameworks for periodical monitoring of government action. We, parliamentarians, should monitor the process by which SDG programmes are delivered at the local level, to ensure the context's specificities are considered and citizens are engaged. Oversight mechanisms, such as parliamentary questions, committee hearings, inquiries and reports, are important tools for assessing the concrete impact of government policies and for bringing the SDGs to the attention of the public and the media, thereby encouraging accountability at all levels. Parliaments should enhance their communication with sub-national and local governments. The SDGs should be implemented starting from the grassroots level.

Partnerships are essential for the SDGs. Internal and external cooperation needs to be stronger and of higher quality, including among parliaments. In addition, parliaments should engage in and advocate for strong sectoral, national, regional and international cooperation and partnerships on the SDGs. Parliamentarians should work across party lines to build the political will to implement the SDGs in their countries, promoting inclusive communication as well as coordination. Particular emphasis should be placed on the sharing of experiences and good practice through the IPU and other fora, and inclusive policy dialogue with the participation of the government, civil society, research institutes and the private sector.

We stress the importance of universal health coverage as a framework to guide health emergency preparedness and response on the basis of the principles of equity, financial risk protection and quality of health services. There is a need to establish legal mandates for the provision of universal health coverage and the protection of the right to health. Particular efforts should be devoted to identifying and targeting vulnerable and marginalized populations facing legal, social or financial barriers in accessing health care. We recognize that investing in universal health coverage can help address poverty and inequalities, and parliaments play an important role in enabling adequate allocation of resources to the health sector despite the budgetary constraints exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Fair and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines should be a priority and is the only way to overcome the pandemic. Global cooperation and solidarity are crucial for better access to vaccination for low-income countries and poorer segments of the population in those countries.

The available data indicate that weather and climate related disasters are on the increase, and coping with their rising social, environmental and economic impacts requires a fundamental shift in risk management to achieve the SDGs. Climate action is needed now. According to scientists, immediate, rapid and large-scale curbs in greenhouse gas emissions have the potential to slow down and reduce global warming and the effects of climate change. Parliaments are the best arbiters for national climate targets because of their constitutional role in holding the executive accountable. We, parliamentarians, can help translate international commitments under the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into national action. Furthermore, we can exercise our budgeting function in a manner that promotes a green recovery.

Parliamentarians can also make a difference in climate action and risk management, by pressuring their governments to shift from a disaster response and recovery strategy to a disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategy that considers local circumstances and addresses the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable citizens – primarily women and girls.

The correlation among biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and the emergence of novel zoonotic diseases such as coronaviruses is widely documented and known. Effective and long-lasting post-COVID-19 economic recovery plans need to reflect coherently the three dimensions of sustainable development, putting the most vulnerable, including women, children, persons with disabilities and marginalized communities at the centre of recovery efforts. By enacting laws and overseeing recovery policies and strategies, parliamentarians have a fundamental role in embracing the opportunity to “build back better”, ensuring current economic recovery endeavours are aligned with the SDGs and adopting the principles of a green economy, such as low-carbon development, resource efficiency and social inclusion. Legislative approval of national COVID-19 economic stimulus packages offers parliamentarians an avenue for promoting a green economy and harmonizing economic and environmental policies.

Economic policies and laws put in place in the post-pandemic phase will shape the resilience, sustainability and competitiveness of national economies for the next few decades. Parliaments can make a historic impact on the transformation and development of national economies, by prioritizing green infrastructure, nature-based solutions and clean energy; by promoting circularity and the creation of green jobs; by building on opportunities provided by digital technologies; and by advancing the rule of law.

As countries are in the process of adjusting their national budgets and priorities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, if funds are redirected from longer-term development objectives to more immediate recovery measures it can adversely impact progress towards achieving the SDGs. Parliamentarians are pivotal in realizing the SDGs, by ensuring that funding and resources are invested effectively to support sustainable development and that budgets are monitored with the SDG targets in mind.

Parliamentarians should advocate for a coherent integration of the SDGs into national budgets. Against limited resources and competing priorities, parliaments need to ensure that adequate funds are devoted to the SDGs and that domestic plans and policies account for the most vulnerable. Parliaments can gather public support for setting sustainable development as a high national priority by using SDG indicators to inform budget debates.

In order to inspire action on the SDGs, we will bring this Outcome Document to the attention of our parliamentary colleagues through all possible channels and will promote discussions around it. We also undertake to bring it to the attention of other relevant stakeholders.

We ask the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community at the next IPU Assembly in Madrid in November 2021. We urge the IPU to continue promoting parliamentary engagement with the SDGs and to work with the United Nations and other relevant partners towards the successful implementation of the SDGs.