



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations

Building political support and inclusive responses to sustainable recovery



17 and 18 February 2022, New York

Provisional programme

Thursday, 17 February	
10:00–10:20	Welcome remarks
	Mr. Abdulla Shahid , President of the 76th session of the General Assembly Mr. Duarte Pacheco , President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
10:20–10:40	Keynote speech
10:40–13:00	<i>Growing economic inequalities as a threat to sustainable development: Drivers and possible solutions</i>
1	<p>The divide between rich and poor, further highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, is one key impediment to reconstituting the social contract between people and between them and their institutions of government. All too often, self-interest prevails over the common good. A competitive ethos pervades all spheres of economic and social life. In public discourse, people are often characterized in economic terms such as “human capital” or “consumers” instead of human beings entitled to economic, social, cultural and political rights. While more wealth is concentrated in a small group of people, the vast majority must contend with stagnant wages, precarious working conditions and declining social protections. Women, who account for 70 per cent of the world’s poor, bear the heaviest brunt. Despite the economic stimulus in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in many countries, austerity politics that punish the most vulnerable while favouring the well-off are making a return.</p> <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is driving economic inequalities and what steps can be taken to change course?• What role should government play in restoring a level playing field for all?
13:00–15:00	Lunch break
15:00–16:30	<i>Building on the past to improve the future: Youth inclusion and the need for inter-generational justice</i>
2	<p>Young people are a building block of every society as they hold the key to the future. They often lead the way in national movements for economic justice, environmental preservation, and democratic reforms. Yet, despite their high numbers, particularly in developing countries, young people tend to be excluded from decision-making in many spheres, beginning with politics, where they are severely underrepresented and isolated. Young people continue to struggle for basic rights such as the right to education as a key</p>

	<p>determinant of human well-being. Girls remain particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and exploitation that may forever stunt their emotional, social and economic development. Recent studies also show that women politicians, especially women parliamentarians, are prone to sexism and sexual violence.</p> <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can young people gain their rightful place in society? • How can structural impediments to opportunities for youth, especially young women, be removed?
<p>16:30–18:00</p>	<p><i>Leaving no one behind: The rights of indigenous peoples, migrants, people with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups</i></p>
<p>3</p>	<p>The new IPU 2022-2026 strategy calls for “ensuring individuals and groups of individuals are treated fairly, in the same way and no less favourably than others irrespective of race, gender, disability, religion, belief, wealth, political persuasion with the ultimate aim of eliminating discrimination and injustice.”</p> <p>While women and youth are seen as legitimate interlocutors of most countries’ political and economic establishment, the same cannot be said of minorities such as indigenous people, migrants, people with disabilities, other vulnerable groups, and others who, in far too many contexts and to varying degrees, must struggle to be recognized as part of the community. Too often, these groups are seen as the “other” whose rights can be denied simply by virtue of their differences from the mainstream. A human rights-based approach to recovery will strengthen the social contract by ensuring that all voices are heard.</p> <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can engagement of minorities be enhanced, and what strategic partnerships can be developed? • How can a human rights-based approach be woven into recovery efforts at national and international levels?
<p style="text-align: center;">Friday, 18 February</p>	
<p>10:00–12:00</p>	<p><i>Gender equality in decision-making as a key to sustainable recovery: The litmus test of inclusive politics</i></p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Women, who account for half of the world’s population, remain disadvantaged in most decision-making processes in politics, business and society at large. Marginal improvements in women’s representation in decision-making worldwide are too slow and setbacks at the national or local level all too frequent. The glass ceiling remains as strong as ever and is often compounded by different forms of discrimination based on race, income and other factors. Yet, ending discrimination against women and dramatically increasing their numbers in parliaments, executive boards, and other leadership positions could unleash a more inclusive recovery for all people, not just for women. It would also provide a litmus test of whether other policies for social inclusion are likely to succeed.</p> <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What stands in the way of women’s representation and equal opportunity? • How can a stronger partnership between men and women in politics and in society be built? • In what ways can UN General Assembly processes and outcomes be made more

	gender-sensitive?
12:00–13:00	SPECIAL BRIEFING: Parliaments at the UN, for a more effective multilateralism to address global challenges
5	<p>Beginning in the year 2000, at the dawn of the second millennium, a new awareness took hold that “governments alone cannot solve the world’s many problems” and that a more inclusive global governance system needed to be built to make the voices of the “peoples” better heard at the United Nations and other multilateral organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Consistent with this vision, the IPU began to claim a stronger role for parliaments in international relations and to convey a parliamentary perspective into major United Nations processes.</p> <p>Following consultations with parliaments and other stakeholders, in September 2021 the UN Secretary-General issued a major report with recommendations <i>Our Common Agenda</i> where he notes, among other things, "I will also explore options to enhance parliamentary inputs at the United Nations, working with our existing partners."</p> <p>This briefing will illustrate the ways and means by which parliaments and the IPU have sought to influence UN decision-making processes and generally support the implementation of UN agreements.</p>
13:00–15:00	Lunch break
15:00– 17:15	<i>Making good on climate change commitments: The people vs. organized interests</i>
6	<p>The consequences of the climate crisis on sustainable development and human well-being are becoming ever more dramatic, with the poor and most vulnerable in our society disproportionately affected. Public support for strong measures to combat the climate crisis is growing with each passing year. Civil society groups, often led by young people and women, and a broad alliance of environmental and social justice organizations are making their voices heard in capitals around the world and at COP meetings such as the latest one (COP26) in Glasgow. Despite this, policy measures taken so far have fallen far short of the mark. Underlying many arguments for this slow progress is the tension between the will of the vast majority and the entrenched interests of industrial conglomerates opposed to drastic measures to curb greenhouse gases because of the high cost of disinvesting from fossil fuels, energy intensive production and consumption patterns.</p> <p>Guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What institutional reforms are needed to ensure strong action on climate change? • How can policy capture by special interests be resolved? • In what ways can more women be brought into climate change negotiations? • How can gender-specific policies be taken into account in efforts to address the climate crisis?
17:15–17:30	Closing session
	<p>Mr. Duarte Pacheco, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union</p> <p>Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the 76th session of the General Assembly</p>