



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Putting the wellbeing of people and the planet at the centre of COVID-19 recovery strategies: The critical role of parliaments

Thursday, 10 March 2022
14:00 – 16:00 ICT (Bangkok time)

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

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically set back progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), affecting all aspects of development and pushing an estimated 75 to 80 million more people in Asia and the Pacific into extreme poverty. By exposing the vulnerability and inequities of our societies, the global health emergency has served as a wake-up call that shows how crucial it is for countries to have policy and legislation address structural issues and ensure preparedness for disaster risk management and prevention. Risk is systemic and the pandemic has taught us that no one is safe until everyone is safe and has pointed to the need to adopt inclusive and coordinated strategies to build a sustainable future for all.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which is unfortunately far from over, has changed the socio-economic context in Asia and the Pacific, creating titanic recovery challenges. According to the [Asia and the Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Progress Report 2021](#), the region is not on track to achieve any of the 17 SDGs by 2030. Progress appears to be very slow or stagnant for half of the goals. Areas that are progressing better than others are those related to good health and well-being (Goal 3), and industry, innovation and infrastructure (Goal 9). The region has also made some relative progress on goals for no poverty (Goal 1), zero hunger (Goal 2), quality education (Goal 4), reduced inequalities (Goal 10), and partnership to achieve the goals (Goal 17). However, the region is not performing well at the environmental level. Critical goals of climate action (Goal 13) and life below water (Goal 14) have alarmingly regressed.

There is an urgent need to accelerate progress by adopting strategies that address the global health crisis while promoting the implementation of the SDGs. COVID-19 response programmes should use the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a guiding light to lay the foundations for more resilient people and societies. Thanks to their integrated and interlinked nature, the SDGs provide a roadmap that can help countries improve their preparedness to respond to the pandemic and implement recovery plans that consider synergies and tradeoffs between the SDGs and their targets. Integrating this approach is extremely important to avoid wasting resources, strengthen coordination and, most of all, implement coherent plans that address current but also recurrent issues.

Parliaments can drive significant change toward sustainable development. They can translate the SDGs into enforceable laws that respond to country-specific development priorities; they can monitor the implementation of these laws; they can ensure that government is accountable to the people for national progress on the SDGs. As members of the highest representative body, parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to shape policy directions and priorities, make sure that the needs of all segments of the society – especially of the most vulnerable and marginalized – are duly taken into account, and to keep track of their governments' domestic and international commitments.

Parliaments can also exercise oversight of national progress on the SDGs through the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) that their governments present at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. According to the IPU's latest report on parliamentary involvement in the 2021 VNRs parliamentary engagement has doubled since 2016. However, the substantial participation of parliaments in the VNR process continues to be lacking while there is significant room for parliaments to contribute more forcefully and effectively to the process. It is therefore crucial for parliamentarians to be informed and to monitor the progress of SDGs implementation through these regional and international platforms as well.

Jointly organized by the IPU and ESCAP, the webinar is in anticipation of the 9th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD), an intergovernmental meeting organized by ESCAP to be held from 28 to 31 March 2022 to review progress on the SDGs at the regional level. The APFSD provides a regional perspective on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by identifying regional trends and consolidating and sharing best practices and lessons learned. The Forum also supports follow-up and reviews progress on the 2030 Agenda at the regional level. Against this backdrop, the 9th APFSD is organized around the theme "Building back better from COVID-19 while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific".

Objectives

The webinar aims to:

- Provide parliamentarians and parliamentary staff with up-to-date information about and tools for monitoring the status of SDGs implementation at the national and regional levels.
- Promote discussion and exchanges on tangible strategies to increase parliamentary engagement in the VNR process in order to monitor government actions, strengthen national ownership, and build political support for the SDGs.
- Promote exchanges and share recommendations on concrete actions parliaments could take to address climate and disaster risk and build resilience for a sustainable development where no one is left behind.

Date: 10 March 2022

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.

Language: The working language will be English.

Webinar Platform: The event will be hosted on the Zoom platform.

Registration: All interested parliamentarians and parliamentary staff can submit their registration through the following link: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlkc-CspzopE9HABkvufci0rRxZK3uJ7yoG>