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Regional seminar on climate change for parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean

28-30 June 2022, Montevideo, Uruguay

REPORT

Over 65 participants from 12 countries gathered together in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 28 to 30 June 2022 for the regional seminar on climate change for parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean. The seminar was jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Parliament of Uruguay.

The seminar provided a space for an urgent inter-parliamentary dialogue on how to address climate change in the region, comprising a number of expert presentations and plenary discussions. It was the first regional event promoting action on climate change through the IPU following the 144th IPU Assembly and the adoption of the [Nusa Dua Declaration](#), which outlines key actions for a sound and transformative parliamentary response to the climate crisis. The seminar paved the way for strengthening regional parliamentary action and cooperation in line with the Declaration.

The seminar focused on identifying the most efficient and impactful ways to enhance parliamentary action on climate change in the Latin America and Caribbean region and ensure implementation of national and international climate agreements. The discussions were enriched by the sharing of best practices, experiences and lessons learned from parliamentarians, regional parliamentary bodies, government representatives and international experts from United Nations agencies and civil society. The seminar also included a field visit to the Maldonado Department of Uruguay to introduce parliamentarians to the environmental projects being undertaken in the country.

Understanding the climate change and environmental context in Latin America and the Caribbean

The seminar's first session provided an overview of the state of climate change and the environment in Latin America and the Caribbean. The presentations focused on the persistent climate and environmental challenges in the region and shared scientific insights from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The speakers in this session highlighted the drivers of climate change and its impact on biodiversity and ecosystems, as well as its impacts on communities in the region. The importance of strengthening legislation to respond to the climate crisis was emphasized. Parliamentarians were invited to advocate for the implementation of stronger regulations to reduce climate risks and deal with the impacts of floods, droughts, coastal erosion and the melting of glaciers. The urgent need to transition to clean energy to mitigate climate change was discussed. The importance of addressing climate-induced displacement and the protection and conservation of species was also mentioned.

Examples of policies and measures being undertaken by countries in the region to respond to climate challenges were discussed, including:

- Strengthening both climate change mitigation and adaptation through climate finance, including by supporting a transition to clean energy;
- Boosting long-term monitoring and knowledge management of climate change and its impacts;
- Ensuring that efforts to address climate change are aligned with sustainable development initiatives and vice versa.

Accelerating a clean energy transition and enhancing climate finance to implement the Paris Agreement

The second session focused on highlighting national and regional actions taken to implement the Paris Agreement, including through the development of more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions. Inadequate climate finance and the continued use of fossil fuels were described as major barriers to climate action and to a clean energy transition. Other obstacles that hinder the implementation of international climate agreements that were identified include fossil fuel subsidies and difficulties with effective monitoring and oversight of government actions in relation to mitigation efforts. There was a call for parliamentarians to better understand the impact of the energy sector on climate change, as well as the impacts of climate change on the energy sector.

Several actions that parliamentarians can take to support a clean and just energy transition and enhance climate finance were highlighted, including:

- Supporting legal frameworks that prioritize clean energy transitions and boost climate finance;
- Encouraging a just transition by promoting investments in renewable energy sources, the creation of decent jobs in green industries, and the phasing out of coal and polluting industries;
- Promoting multi-stakeholder dialogues to ensure the needs of all constituents are met in the energy transition and that it does not create or exacerbate inequalities;
- Advocating for increased investment and resources to support the implementation of climate agreements, including transparent and predictable finance, capacity-building support and technology transfer.

Following this session, a regional launch of the Global Parliamentary Report (GPR) was held. This is the third GPR produced by the IPU and the United Nations Development Programme. This GPR focuses on public engagement in the work of parliament. Key insights from the report were introduced and recommendations for strengthening public engagement for more inclusive and responsive parliaments in the region were provided.

Prioritizing equitable climate action: Promoting public participation and social inclusion

In this third session, the importance of adopting an inclusive climate legislative framework that prioritizes social and gender concerns was expressed. Parliamentarians shared how they can use their representation functions to consult and advocate for the well-being of underrepresented and marginalized groups, including women, youth, indigenous peoples and minorities, in the context of climate change. There was an emphasis on leaving no one behind in the climate crisis and ensuring that all people's environmental rights are respected. The importance of engaging constituents, especially those on the front lines of climate change, to directly inform policy, including adaptation policies, was expressed. Public participation in environmental matters was seen as an important feature for more equitable climate action, including by using conservation programmes as an opportunity to support local livelihoods. A landmark treaty in the region, the Escazú Agreement, was presented and parliamentarians were encouraged to support the ratification and

implementation of this agreement in their respective countries. Parliamentary efforts to ensure equity and social inclusion in climate action that were identified include:

- Advocating for the rights of underrepresented and marginalized groups in decision-making on environmental issues affecting their communities;
- Bringing the protection of environmentalist defenders and environmental justice to the forefront of the climate agenda;
- Budgeting for conservation of natural resources and habitats in a way that also supports sustainable local livelihoods;
- Encouraging the signing, ratification and implementation of the Escazú Agreement.

Supporting climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods: Ensuring food security and human and environmental health

In this session, the impacts of the climate crisis on agriculture and food production in the region were described, including the serious consequences that climate change is having on food security and human health. The climate crisis was seen as not only driving food insecurity but also as a major driver of poverty, as millions of smallholder farmers and fishers are dependent on the agricultural and fisheries sectors for their livelihoods. The need for stronger legislation that supports climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable development was emphasized. PARLATINO's Model Law on Climate Change and Food and Nutrition Security was presented. The Model Law provides a legal framework to inspire national laws on this topic. Parliamentarians were called to focus efforts not only on mitigation, but also on adaptation, as farmers and rural communities that are highly dependent on natural resources to sustain their livelihoods are already being severely impacted by climate change. Opportunities to strengthen parliamentary action on this topic include:

- Promoting policies and laws that recognize the interlinkages between climate, food security and health;
- Supporting legislation that reduces the environmental footprint of agri-food systems and reduces and prevents food loss and waste;
- Approving budgets that increase resources for adaptation and social protection schemes to minimize the social and economic threats faced by farmers and fishers due to climate change;
- Encouraging investments in sustainable farming technologies to help address issues related to natural resource scarcity, including water scarcity.

Given that climate change does not respect national borders, this regional seminar highlighted the critical importance of regional cooperation to confront the climate crisis. Inter-parliamentary dialogue and the sharing of best practices was seen as being paramount to effective climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean, and for implementing the actions outlined in the Nusa Dua Declaration at the regional level. The IPU stands ready to continue supporting parliaments in their efforts to address climate change, and is committed to providing parliaments with a platform for national, regional and global dialogue to facilitate stronger partnerships for climate action. The regional seminar's outcomes will be brought to the attention of the global parliamentary community at the 145th IPU Assembly in Kigali, Rwanda.