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146th IPU Assembly Manama (11–15 March 2023)

Panel discussion *Parliamentary action on biodiversity: Translating global commitments into national action*

Monday, 13 March 2023, 9:30 – 11:00
Convention Cluster Room 18 (EWB)

Concept note

Background

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has made addressing climate change and protecting our planet a top priority. Climate change is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss and is already affecting plants and animals in vulnerable ecosystems worldwide, including coral reefs, forests, mountains and polar ecosystems.¹ Unless action is stepped up to address the climate crisis and preserve nature, the world's biodiversity will only continue to vanish.

Biodiversity refers to the variety of all living things on our planet. It provides us with fresh water, clean air and fertile soil. It is essential for human health, nutrition, economic activities and livelihoods. Yet human activity is now causing plant and animal species to disappear at faster rates than ever before. According to a 2019 report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), about one million species may already face extinction – in many cases within decades unless ambitious action to protect nature is taken now.² The report shows that 75% of land environments and over 65% of marine environments have been significantly affected by human activity, with detrimental impacts on biodiversity.

Countries around the globe have recognized the urgent need to address the nature crisis. In December 2022, government representatives from nearly 190 countries gathered in Montreal, Canada at the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP15) to agree on a global accord to halt and reverse nature loss. The outcome of COP15 was the adoption of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), a landmark biodiversity agreement with clearly defined goals and targets to address the dangerous loss of biodiversity and restore natural ecosystems.

Parliaments have an integral role to play in ensuring that international commitments to protect biodiversity are translated into effective national action. These include the GBF, the biodiversity-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – especially SDGs 14 and 15 – and the Paris Agreement to reduce current greenhouse gas emissions that are detrimental to biodiversity. Given the close interlinkages between biodiversity, climate action and sustainable development, parliaments can ensure that these instruments are implemented in a complementary manner, that implementation is supported by strong legislation and appropriate budgets, and that governments are held to account for their action.

¹ <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/5-key-drivers-nature-crisis>.

² <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>.

Objectives

This panel discussion will bring together biodiversity experts, civil society representatives and parliamentarians from different regions of the world to discuss biodiversity concerns and options for addressing them. It will serve as a platform for sharing experiences and knowledge on biodiversity action, including its linkages with climate change and sustainable development. The event will also provide a space to discuss challenges and lessons learned from around the globe. Parliamentarians will hear about the outcomes of COP15, namely the GBF, what it means for the planet and how they can support its implementation in their countries.

Parliamentarians will have an opportunity to learn more about biodiversity trends, to familiarize themselves with global agreements on biodiversity and to identify entry points for stronger national biodiversity action. Given the urgency of the crisis, particular attention will be paid to the role of parliaments in ensuring that international biodiversity-related commitments are effectively implemented in national contexts in a time-sensitive manner.

Guiding questions

Following the panel presentations, time will be allocated for an interactive discussion and delegates will have the opportunity to take the floor.

The event will seek to promote parliamentary dialogue on the following questions in particular:

- What are the obstacles to advancing parliamentary action on biodiversity?
- What is required for parliaments to better address biodiversity loss through their legislative and budgetary functions?
- What concrete steps are parliaments taking to implement global agreements on biodiversity, including the GBF and SDGs 14 and 15 in particular?
- How can oversight of government action to implement these agreements be effectively practised nationally?
- How are parliamentarians engaging their constituents to understand how biodiversity loss affects their lives and livelihoods?
- What action is being taken to ensure constituents' needs are met?

Practical arrangements

This 90-minute session will be open to all delegates at the 146th IPU Assembly.

The event will be conducted in English and French.