



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Parliaments for sustainable development

Parliamentary event at the SDG Summit and other High-Level Meetings

21 September 2023, 9:00 – 12:30

Church Center for the United Nations
777 United Nations Plaza (entrance on 44th Street, near 1st Avenue)
New York

Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are badly off track. As a result, poverty and inequality are on the rise, climate change is out of control, and human well-being is deteriorating on multiple fronts.

The SDG Summit that opens the High-Level Week of the 78th General Assembly of the United Nations (UN), from 18 to 22 September 2023 in New York, is a major opportunity to recommit to action for sustainable development at the highest political level of heads of state and of government. The Summit will be followed by high-level meetings touching on other urgent issues, including universal health coverage, tuberculosis and pandemic prevention.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has been active on all of these issues and has called upon parliaments to hold governments accountable for their commitments. With so much at stake, the IPU is organizing a meeting for members of parliament to highlight their role in the implementation of the SDGs and of global commitments on health.

Parliamentary action for health

Health is a critical determinant of human well-being and of development in general. The IPU has been at the forefront of parliamentary engagement on two key issues: universal health coverage (UHC) and global health security (GHS). Long considered by the World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General as two sides of the same coin, UHC and GHS are key to building more resilient societies.

Following the 2019 High Level Meeting (HLM) of the UN on Universal Health Coverage, the IPU resolution *Achieving universal health coverage by 2030: The role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health*, set out a road map for parliaments to support UHC in its own right as well as to enable SDG3 on health and well-being.

Parliaments reported to the IPU that the COVID-19 pandemic diverted attention and resources away from other health priorities and created new barriers to access to health care. They further highlighted challenges in ensuring health equity, but also promising steps on UHC legislation. The 2023 HLM on UHC will provide an opportunity to reinvigorate commitment and action to strengthen health systems, focusing on resilience and equitable access, as well as to review the implementation of the IPU resolution thus far.

In spite of the challenges posed to UHC efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities to strengthen global cooperation on GHS. The HLM on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response aims to mobilize political momentum and promote a multi-sectoral approach to GHS at the same time as ongoing negotiations for a new WHO treaty or other instrument on pandemic

preparedness. For their part, parliaments need to be aware of the risk of new health emergencies and of the preventive actions required at the national level. The IPU accompanied parliaments through the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that they remained central to national and global responses, and will continue raising awareness on GHS instruments.

Accelerating SDG implementation

Beyond action on key SDGs, from the very beginning of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), the IPU has been promoting the mainstreaming of the SDG framework as a whole into the work of parliaments and providing a platform to exchange experiences and lessons learned on SDG implementation. To date, these efforts have yielded good but limited results. Many parliaments have managed to institutionalize the SDGs within their structures, taking legislative, budgetary and oversight measures in accordance with national development priorities. In others, however, awareness of the SDGs remains low.

Individual SDGs are often treated in silos with little appreciation of the inter-connectedness of the goals and targets, which requires the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development to be balanced, taking into account trade-offs and synergies. In some countries, parliamentary action – or the lack thereof – on the SDGs has had negative spillovers on other countries, undermining global solidarity and making the goals harder to achieve at the global level.

Climate change, which corresponds to SDG13, is an issue that cuts across most of the SDG framework. The urgency of tackling the runaway climate crisis underscores the need for integrated approaches to accelerate SDG implementation and secure a sustainable future for all. Because of this, climate change is a top priority for the IPU and its Member Parliaments.

Objectives and modalities

The IPU is organizing a half-day meeting on 21 September 2023 to define a way forward for parliaments to support the outcomes of the SDG Summit and health HLMs. The meeting will:

- Provide a space to discuss the parliamentary implications of current developments on the 2030 Agenda, UHC and pandemic preparedness;
- Discuss entry points for parliaments to accelerate SDG implementation to meet the goals by 2030;
- Foster strategic decision-making through comprehensive approaches;
- Encourage peer-to-peer learning to strengthen parliamentary action on the SDGs and health.

The meeting will take place in person in New York. It is intended for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff participating in the UN General Assembly as part of their national (governmental) delegation. The event will be held in English only.

IPU resources

- SDG self-assessment toolkit: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/toolkits/2017-01/parliaments-and-sustainable-development-goals-self-assessment-toolkit>
- Case studies on parliamentary implementation of the SDGs: <https://www.ipu.org/news/case-study>
- Parliamentary action plan on climate change: <http://archive.ipu.org/pdf/publications/climat16-e.pdf>
- Policy note on green COVID-19 recovery: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/other/2020-12/green-approaches-covid-19-recovery-policy-note-parliamentarians>
- 10 actions for greener parliaments: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reference/2023-03/10-actions-greener-parliaments>
- Handbook on universal health coverage: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/handbooks/2022-12/path-towards-universal-health-coverage>
- Issue brief on universal health coverage: <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2021-07/winnable-battle-parliamentarians-and-universal-health-coverage>

- Handbook on global health security:
<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/handbooks/2022-03/strengthening-health-security-preparedness-international-health-regulations-2005>

Provisional programme

Opening

9:00 – 9:15 **Opening**
Highlights from the SDG Summit and HLMs on health: key takeaways for parliaments

Parliamentary action for health

9:15 – 10:45 **Toward better health for all: The challenges ahead**
The session will present evidence and data on UHC progress and preliminary findings on implementation of the IPU resolution on UHC. In the context of current developments in the global health security architecture, particular attention will be paid to the linkages between UHC and health security.

Guiding questions:

- What are the points of alignment and divergence between the UHC and global health security agendas?
- What concrete steps can parliaments take toward UHC and health security in their respective countries? What obstacles are they facing? What good practices can be shared?

Accelerating SDG implementation

10:45 – 12:15 **The SDGs: A transformative agenda in peril**
The session will provide an overview of the systemic change required to accelerate progress on the SDGs and identify entry points for strengthening parliamentary action to mainstream the SDGs in parliamentary work.

Guiding questions:

- What initiatives have parliaments taken to implement the SDGs and what are the challenges they face in the process? What is needed for parliamentary action to accelerate so that the SDGs are met by 2030?
- What are the synergies and trade-offs between climate-related SDGs and other SDGs? How can parliaments jointly pursue environmental, social and economic priorities?

Closing

12:15 – 12:30 **Main conclusions and way forward**