



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Passengers or pilots: Are parliaments driving their own development?

AGORA Community of Practice on the Common Principles for Support to Parliament



Online, 19 March 2025, 13:00–15:00 CET (Geneva time)

Parliaments and democracies are facing headwinds. A variety of indicators show that democracy is in decline around the world, and according to a recent survey only 34% of citizens expressed confidence in their parliaments.¹

Whether they are newly established, or long-standing, all parliaments face complex roles of legislation, oversight and representation in an increasingly dynamic ecosystem. They must be continuously renewed and improved to meet the new challenges of the day and to respond to the evolving needs of citizens.

To meet these needs, some parliaments rely on external support, other parliaments provide support and many benefit from both approaches. Whether it is through peer-to-peer engagement, or through regional, and international partners, such parliamentary projects can effectively contribute to preventing or reversing democratic backsliding.

One of the proven requirements for support to be effective is for it to be driven, first and foremost, by the needs of beneficiary parliaments themselves.

Recognizing this, for over 10 years, the [Common Principles for Support to Parliaments](#) invites the parliamentary community to promote support that puts parliaments in the lead. Adopted by the IPU Member Parliaments in October 2014 and now endorsed by 78% of national parliaments, they set out ten fundamental principles for planning and implementing programmes to strengthen parliaments. It is only natural that the first principle of the Common Principles is that *parliamentary support partners are guided by the needs of parliament itself*. This underlines that parliament is best placed to articulate its needs and define strategic objectives as well as tactical approaches, with partners helping enable this work.

More than 10 years later since the adoption of the Common Principles, and in a context of democratic backsliding, are parliaments increasingly driving their own development? How can we measure progress? How have beneficiaries, support-providers, partner organizations, and donors been innovating to apply this principle? What tools, mechanisms, and practices have helped, or hindered, greater parliamentary-driven development?

This Community of Practice online workshop will seek to explore these questions through an interactive exchange with members of parliament, parliamentary staff, and representatives of partners and other stakeholders involved in parliamentary development. Participants are invited to come prepared to engage and share their own experiences.

Languages

Interpretation will be provided in English and French.

[Registration](#)

¹ [Freedom in the World 2024, The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict](#); [The Global State of Democracy 2023](#); [EIU report, Democracy Index 2023](#); [World Values Survey Data analysis tool](#).

Provisional Programme

Wednesday, 19 March 2025	
13:00–13:15	<p>Moderator: Mr. Jonathan Murphy, Head of Programme, Inter Pares</p> <p>Opening remarks and a brief overview of the Common Principles for Support to Parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Jonathan Lang, Project Officer, Technical Cooperation Programme, IPU
13:15–14:15	<p>Passengers or pilots: Are parliamentary support projects increasingly guided by parliament?</p> <p>Interactive discussion followed by Q&A</p> <p>Keynote presentation from Ms. Kristen Sample, Director of Democratic Governance, National Democratic Institute (NDI)</p> <p>Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Roy Ngulube, Clerk, National Assembly, Zambia • Madam Steejit Taipiboonsuk, Deputy Secretary General, House of Representatives of Thailand • Ms. Rose Ikiror Semakula, Deputy Clerk, Parliament of Uganda • Ms. Aleida Ferreyra, Global lead, Democratic Institutions and Processes in a Digital Era, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
14:15–14:55	<p>Knowledge lab</p> <p>Breakout groups and reporting</p> <p>Participants will be invited to choose a breakout group according to the following questions. Due to interpretation limitations there will be one bilingual group (with interpretation), one English group and one French group.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you rate progress in parliaments driving their own development in your work as an MP or staff of parliament or as a representative of an organization who provides support to parliaments? How can progress be measured? (answered by all groups) • What innovations are you using to enhance parliamentary-driven support? (answered by English- and French-speaking groups with interpretation) • What factors are key to effective parliamentary development? (Answered by French-speaking group) • What more can be done in the future for parliamentary development to better defend against democratic backsliding? (Answered by English-speaking group)
14:55–15:00	<p>Concluding remarks</p>

Further reading

- [The Common Principles for Support to Parliament](#)
- [Celebrating 10 years of the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments: Why they are important and how they have been used](#)
- [Putting parliamentary self-development into practice: A Guide to the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments](#)