

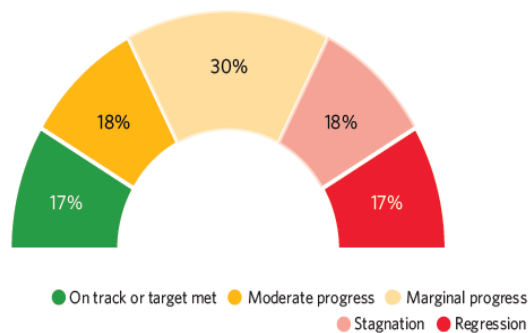
Conference report

Fast-forwarding the SDGs through parliamentary action

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted unanimously by all United Nations (UN) Member States in 2015, represent an ambitious, comprehensive agenda to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and ensure sustainable development for all by 2030. With just five years remaining, global progress has been mixed. While important gains have been made, the world is not on track to meet many of the Goals. This situation calls for urgent and coordinated action, particularly from parliaments, whose role in shaping national development trajectories has never been more critical.

Despite widespread commitment, implementation of the SDGs has encountered major challenges, many of them compounded by global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, armed conflicts and

Overall progress across targets based on 2015–2024 global aggregate data



Source: United Nations, The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024

climate-related disasters. These disruptions have reversed progress in some areas, widened existing inequalities and strained public institutions. In many countries, progress has slowed or stagnated altogether. According to [recent UN reports](#), 17% of the SDG targets are currently on track globally. Goals related to hunger, climate action, gender equality and strong institutions are among the most off-course.

Nevertheless, there are significant achievements worth recognizing. Globally, child mortality rates have continued to fall, access to electricity and the internet has expanded, and many countries have improved school enrolment and literacy rates. Innovations in

technology, financing and partnerships are helping to advance sustainable agriculture, renewable energy and access to healthcare. These gains demonstrate that, with the right policies and political will, progress is possible even in difficult circumstances.

At the regional level, success has varied widely. In sub-Saharan Africa, countries such as Kenya and Rwanda have made advances in clean energy and digital finance, supporting progress towards both SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure). In the Asia-Pacific region, countries like Bangladesh and Viet Nam have achieved notable progress towards SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), supported by industrial diversification and export-led growth. However, the region continues to face environmental pressures and remains vulnerable to natural disasters, putting sustainability at risk.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, social protection programmes have advanced efforts towards SDG 2 (zero hunger) by helping to reduce food insecurity, while Indigenous rights and climate resilience are gaining greater attention in policymaking. Yet political instability and rising inequality remain major concerns. In Europe and Northern America, performance on health, education and infrastructure is generally strong, but high consumption patterns, and unequal access to housing and services, are undermining the region's progress towards SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production).

Examples of parliamentary action

Through their legislative, budgetary and oversight roles, parliaments directly influence how the SDGs are reflected in national policies and how effectively they are implemented. Parliaments also serve as a bridge between citizens and the State, making them uniquely positioned to ensure that no one is left behind in the development process.

Several recent examples from Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) [case studies](#) illustrate how parliaments are putting the SDGs into practice in concrete, often innovative ways.

In Uzbekistan, the Oliy Majlis has aligned the country's 2022–2026 national development strategy with the SDGs, ensuring that public and private financing is channelled towards sustainable development priorities. The IPU supported this process by providing strategic guidance and fostering greater coherence between legislative action and the country's SDG commitments.

The Senate of Spain has established a joint permanent committee on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, comprising members from both the Congress of Deputies and the Senate. One of the committee's initial tasks was to analyse gaps in the country's SDG implementation. The assessment exercise included consultations with experts, State authorities and other stakeholders, with the findings compiled into a final report for the government. The government must regularly update the committee on SDG progress.

In Indonesia, the House of Representatives worked closely with the Ministry of National Development Planning and BPS-Statistics Indonesia, the national statistics agency, to develop an open-access SDG monitoring portal. This initiative enhances transparency, empowers civil society and encourages public engagement in holding the government to account for its commitments.

The Senate of Mexico has created a cross-party committee dedicated to the 2030 Agenda, which provides technical advice, tracks federal and subnational progress, and engages with civil society and academia. This institutional mechanism ensures continuity across legislative terms and fosters a whole-of-government approach to sustainable development.

Meanwhile, the Parliament of Fiji has mainstreamed the SDGs across the work of its six standing committees and produced a tailored guidance note for MPs on how to exercise oversight of SDG implementation, helping to ensure consistency and accountability across all thematic areas of parliamentary work.

How the IPU supports parliaments in achieving the SDGs



The IPU continues to provide a comprehensive suite of support services – including knowledge tools, capacity-building and platforms for dialogue – to enable parliaments to meet their responsibilities in achieving the SDGs.

Since the last World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, the IPU has developed targeted knowledge products to help parliaments strengthen their contribution to sustainable development through more effective legislation and oversight. The [SDG-informed legislative scrutiny](#) toolkit helps parliaments assess how well their existing laws and policies correspond with the Goals, and how new legislation can better support implementation. In the health sector, the IPU has produced two parliamentary handbooks – [The path towards universal health coverage](#) and [Strengthening health security preparedness: The International Health Regulations \(2005\)](#) – as well as an [online course on health taxes](#) in collaboration with the WHO, which is designed to

help parliaments understand and apply effective fiscal measures for public health. On climate change, the IPU publication [10 actions for greener parliaments](#) outlines concrete actions parliaments can take to institutionalize sustainability measures, while the [Parliamentary oversight of national climate commitments](#) toolkit offers actionable guidance for aligning national climate

legislation with the Paris Agreement and other global commitments. The IPU has also produced a number of [podcasts](#) featuring conversations with MPs and experts from around the world on a variety of SDG issues, with a particular focus on health and climate change.



Regional seminar for the Caribbean Parliaments (2024)

In addition to publishing knowledge products and resources, the IPU offers hands-on capacity-building support to parliaments, with a strong focus on developing countries. For instance, the Organization recently provided technical assistance to parliamentary committees in Malawi and Zambia with a view to enhancing their legislative, budgetary and oversight roles in the area of women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health. In the Gambia, meanwhile, the IPU played a key role in backing the National Assembly’s efforts to eliminate female genital

mulitiation, contributing to the successful preservation of laws prohibiting this harmful practice. And in Benin, the IPU supported capacity-building for the National Assembly on strengthening the management of chemical products and their waste, which resulted in the adoption of a new law.

The IPU also convenes regional and interregional SDG seminars, offering parliaments a platform to exchange experiences and good practices tailored to common priorities. These events create a space for peer learning, coordination and joint problem-solving. In parallel, the Organization supports parliamentary engagement at the global level, including through regular parliamentary meetings at COP climate conferences, where parliamentarians can engage directly with global climate policy negotiations and advocate for more ambitious, inclusive national actions. The IPU also strengthens parliamentary oversight of the SDGs by encouraging and facilitating parliamentary involvement in the voluntary national review processes and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.



Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 10th World Water Forum (2024)

Building on its climate action portfolio, the IPU has recently launched a new global project focused on strengthening parliamentary capacities to reduce methane emissions – an urgent climate priority aligned with the Global Methane Pledge. The project, a partnership with the Andean Parliament,



Parliamentary Meeting at COP29 (2024)

aims to fill knowledge and capacity gaps by developing tailored resources, facilitating inter-parliamentary exchanges and promoting legislative action on methane reduction. These efforts are part of the Organization’s broader strategy to strengthen parliaments as institutions, fostering inclusiveness, accountability and resilience. By equipping parliaments with the tools, knowledge and networks they need to act decisively, the IPU is helping to ensure that legislative institutions are not just observers but leaders in the global push towards sustainable development.

The time to act is now: Parliaments must fast-forward the SDGs

With less than five years remaining until the 2030 deadline, the world is falling dangerously behind on the SDGs. The window for action is narrowing and incremental progress is no longer enough. Parliaments must now step up as engines of acceleration. As the democratic institutions closest to the people, and as lawmakers, budget approvers and watchdogs, parliaments are uniquely positioned to drive the urgent transformation needed to achieve the SDGs.

In order to fast-forward progress towards the SDGs, parliaments must embed the Goals at the heart of their work. This means scrutinizing legislation through an SDG lens, aligning national budgets with sustainable development priorities, and holding governments to account for results. Parliaments must ensure that policies are inclusive, rights-based and rooted in evidence, with a strong focus on those furthest behind. Cross-party cooperation and long-term planning are essential to create the political and institutional continuity needed to sustain SDG implementation beyond electoral cycles.

But acceleration will not happen in isolation. Parliaments must also deepen their cooperation at regional and global levels. The IPU provides a vital platform for mutual learning and joint action. Through regional seminars, global parliamentary meetings, technical assistance and a growing suite of knowledge tools, the IPU equips parliaments to legislate more effectively, to learn from one another and to stay aligned with global commitments.

Ultimately, achieving the SDGs is not just a matter of global targets – it is a test of political will and democratic leadership. Parliaments must rise to this moment with ambition, urgency and solidarity. The decisions made today will shape our societies for generations. The time for talking has passed. Now is the time for bold legislative action.