



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

IPU Sustainability Policy

Adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 217th session (Istanbul, April 2026)

1. The IPU's commitment to climate action and environmental sustainability

As the global organization of national parliaments, the IPU works to create a world where every voice counts, and where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development.

The IPU promotes democratic governance, institutions and values, working with parliaments and parliamentarians to articulate and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people. It works for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment, climate action and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action.

Since 2009, the IPU has pursued a full-fledged area of work dedicated to climate action and environmental protection. The IPU works directly with parliaments to advocate, legislate, budget and exercise oversight through a climate action and environmental sustainability lens. The IPU provides tailored national and regional assistance to ensure that parliaments are equipped and empowered to support the implementation of global agreements, such as the Paris Agreement, within their countries. Through its global network, the IPU also provides a platform for the world's parliaments to convene, share good practices on climate action, and promote peer learning, while also providing an opportunity to strengthen the collective voice of parliaments in international high-level climate debates, including the climate COPs.

The 2022–2026 IPU Strategy identifies climate change as an existential threat and mandates the Organization to take urgent action. The IPU commits to helping parliaments implement the Paris Agreement, accelerate decarbonization, and reduce their institutional carbon footprints, while upholding the multilateral consensus and promoting a just transition. The Strategy also stresses that the IPU will endeavour to reduce the environmental impact of its own activities. The ultimate goal of the IPU's action on climate change is to contribute to a healthier planet where global warming is limited to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

This Environmental Sustainability Policy is both a direct expression of the 2022–2026 IPU Strategy and a lasting institutional commitment that extends beyond a single strategic cycle. It provides a framework for embedding environmental sustainability considerations into the IPU's functioning, its Assemblies, and its programmatic work with Member Parliaments, ensuring that the IPU "walks the talk" and supports collective action for the benefit of the environment on which we all depend. As the climate crisis and related environmental pressures are continually evolving, the policy sets out a clear vision for enhancing the environmental sustainability of the IPU's work while also remaining adaptable.

2. Purpose and scope of the Policy

The Policy is intended to be an initial guiding framework to further enhance the IPU's engagement in safeguarding the environment and advancing parliamentary action to transform societies across the globe so that they operate within safe and just planetary boundaries. It is thereby one of the key policies for the fulfilment of the IPU's Strategy, cutting across the work and functioning of the Organization as a whole.

While this Policy focuses on the protection and renewal of the natural environment, it has been designed as a living framework and will be built upon and refined over time to reflect evolving scientific knowledge, emerging good practices and the growing experience of parliaments in addressing climate change and environmental sustainability challenges. In this way, the Policy not only provides immediate guidance but also establishes a platform for continuous improvement and ambition. It will also form the basis for future plans to foster wider social and economic equality and well-being.

The Policy is intended for the IPU Secretariat, Member Parliaments, MPs and parliamentary staff, as they interact with and within the IPU.

Building on past and existing work and programmes, and in alignment with the IPU Statutes and Rules, the Policy sets the standard for the planning, implementation and monitoring of tangible actions while allowing for iteration and expansion over time.

Key terms used in this policy

Climate action is an umbrella term used to refer to the broad range of actions taken to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change consequences¹.

Environmental sustainability refers to the application of the principle of sustainability (meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs²) to the way the IPU and its Member Parliaments manage their environmental impacts.

3. Action areas

To translate this policy into practice, the IPU will act in three key areas:

1. The functioning of the IPU Secretariat
2. The organization of IPU Assemblies and events
3. Programmatic work with Member Parliaments

Each action area sets out commitments, areas of action and responsibilities. Together, they provide a framework for progressive improvement, shared accountability and the integration of environmental sustainability across all aspects of the IPU's work.

Action area 1: Functioning of the IPU Secretariat

Purpose: This action area focuses on the operations of the IPU Secretariat and aims to ensure that it leads by example, reduces its environmental footprint and demonstrates good practices for the IPU membership.

The IPU Secretariat will work to progressively reduce the negative environmental impacts and, wherever possible, increase the positive environmental impacts of its action and work. Action plans based on this Policy will be developed and implemented with an iterative cycle of continual improvement using a series of relevant management tools. The Secretariat will both increase the knowledge and agency of personnel and aim to serve as an example of good practice for Member Parliaments. It will continue to leverage the IPU Headquarters' geographical location within "international Geneva" and its numerous partnerships to collaborate with United Nations and other international organizations that specialize in different areas of environmental sustainability. Scientists from different disciplines have been widely critical of carbon offsetting, both in concept and in practice.³ Following that scientific lead, the IPU will strive to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions (including direct emissions; indirect emissions from the purchase and use of energy; and all other indirect emissions in the value chain) wherever possible and engage in carbon offsetting only as the last in a series of mitigating actions.

Key commitments:

- Continue to promote a culture of environmental sustainability across the Secretariat.
- Integrate environmental sustainability considerations into daily operations and decision making.
- Conduct a baseline assessment of the IPU's current environmental footprint, including at IPU Headquarters, to be used as a point of comparison to measure progress through the policy's implementation.
- Review and update any existing environmental practices at the IPU and consolidate into a single document.
- Strive to reduce emissions from facilities, travel and procurement, committing to carbon offsetting only as a last resort.

¹ See the [UNDP Climate Dictionary](#)

² See the [UNEP Glossary](#)

³ Anderson, K. *The inconvenient truth of carbon offsets*. *Nature*, 484, 7 (2012). Kuch, D. *Now we know the flaws of carbon offsets, it's time to get real about climate change*. *The Conversation*, (2022). Rogelj, J. et al. Three ways to improve net-zero emissions targets. *Nature*, 591, 365-368 (2021).

Key actions:

- (1) **Facilities:** Over the past 20 years, the negative impacts on the environment of activities and operations at IPU Headquarters in Geneva have been reduced by increasing waste recycling, reducing printing and paper use, and installing LED lighting and double-glazed windows throughout the main building. The Secretariat will continue to work with specialists to improve performance and shift from linear to circular flows in energy, water and other materials. Actions will follow the “6 Rs of sustainability” sequence: rethink, refuse, reduce, reuse, repair, recycle. Measures will be implemented to adapt to the changing climate in the Geneva region.
- (2) **Travel:** Since air travel represents one of the Secretariat's greatest sources of greenhouse gas emissions and can also have negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of staff, the IPU will re-examine current practices and develop “smart travel” plans both for daily commutes and for travel for events, workshops, support activities and meetings. It will gradually enhance the implementation of solutions to allow for hybrid participation in IPU events (both in-person and virtual). The existing policy on telecommuting contributes to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions for daily commutes.
- (3) **Procurement:** The Secretariat will engage in sustainable procurement, which can be defined as a process for public sector organizations to “meet their needs for goods, services, works and utilities in a way that achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only to the organization but also to society and the economy, whilst minimizing and if possible avoiding damage to the environment”.⁴ The procurement needs of the Secretariat include furniture and fittings, cleaning services, management of garden and outdoor spaces, and building renovation.
- (4) **Information technology:** To reduce the negative impacts of information technology equipment and infrastructure on the environment, the Secretariat will evaluate the procurement and use of hardware and software, and improve performance according to the same “6 Rs of sustainability” sequence.
- (5) **Finance:** Since 2005, the Organization has been part of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, which considers environmental, social and governance elements in investment decision-making processes. Going forward, the IPU will gradually integrate environmental impact assessment into strategic decision-making regarding its own banking and financing.
- (6) **Programme design:** The IPU will gradually integrate environmental sustainability checks into the design of new initiatives, programmes and projects ensuring that environmental risks and negative impacts are avoided from the outset.

Action area 2: IPU Assemblies, events and other activities

Purpose: This action area addresses the environmental impacts of IPU Assemblies, conferences, events – both virtual and in-person – and other activities and initiatives aimed at implementing the IPU's Strategy and workplans. The aim is to make them more sustainable and resource-efficient, while supporting meaningful participation.

This action area aims to re-examine both virtual and in-person events to reduce the negative impacts of linear natural resource use, ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss. By following the “6 Rs of sustainability” wherever possible, the IPU will work to increase the circularity and non-toxicity of material flows, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Actions will include elements such as the optimization of event scheduling during a given year and from year to year, the rationalization of participation, a gradual increase in hybrid events, favouring where possible low-carbon transport to and from events and within host cities during Assemblies, and the integration of environmental performance indicators in event planning and organization.

⁴ UNEP. [*Sustainable public procurement. How to wake the sleeping giant!*](#) Introducing the United Nations Environment Programme's Approach. 2021.

Key commitments:

- Re-examine current event models to look for ways to minimize natural resource use, emissions and waste.
- Apply the “6 Rs of sustainability” to event and activity design and management.
- Support Host Parliaments in implementing sustainable practices.

Key actions:

1. Engage in consultations with Member Parliaments to set goals to reduce negative environmental impacts related to events, and develop smart virtual, hybrid and in-person events, conferences and Assemblies.
2. Identify environmental performance indicators which can be considered in event planning, e.g. venue selection, catering, transportation.
3. Partner with relevant UN and other Geneva-based organizations to identify key indicators to measure and monitor performance.
4. Support Host Parliaments with technical assistance and access to good practices in sustainable event planning, management and practices for Assemblies and other major events.
5. Produce environmental impact reports for each IPU Assembly to monitor progress and facilitate learning.
6. Develop in-house capacity to implement these key actions.

Action area 3: IPU programmatic work with Member Parliaments

Purpose: This action area aims to support Member Parliaments in implementing climate action commitments agreed upon during events and Assemblies, and to ensure accountability for that implementation. Numerous parliaments have taken the lead in this area, by implementing measures aimed at greening their institutions and their way of working; or leading legislative initiatives for the achievement of climate action objectives.

The Secretariat will continue current programmes that foster environmental sustainability in the operation of parliaments and assist Member Parliaments in becoming leading change agents for environmental sustainability within their countries. In accordance with the Statutes (Article 6), Members will ensure “the implementation of decisions taken” regarding environmental sustainability. They will fulfil their duty “to submit the resolutions of the IPU within their respective Parliament”, “to stimulate their implementation” and “to inform the IPU Secretariat [...] of the steps taken and results obtained” (Article 7).

Key commitments:

- Encourage Member Parliaments to adopt sustainable practices within their own institutions.
- Facilitate peer learning and exchange of good practices related to climate action.
- Monitor and report on Member Parliaments’ actions and progress through existing IPU mechanisms.
- Provide targeted support, technical assistance and awareness-raising for Member Parliaments.

Key actions:

Member Parliaments and the IPU Secretariat will:

1. Engage with existing and future programmes to safeguard the natural environment.
2. Measure and improve performance on key environmental indicators for the operations of parliaments.
3. Foster environmental policy-making informed by the latest scientific findings and good practices shared among Member Parliaments.

The IPU Secretariat specifically will:

- Organize briefings for Member Parliaments on the IPU Environmental Sustainability Policy, provide awareness-raising activities for parliaments to enhance their understanding of environmental sustainability principles, and encourage the adoption of environmentally friendly measures in parliamentary operations.
- Pursue implementation of programmes for parliaments to enhance their capacity to safeguard the environment.
- Document Member Parliaments' engagement, actions taken and results obtained under the remit of this Policy, and provide regular opportunities for sharing of good practices to inspire action in other parliaments including through the accountability segment at IPU Assemblies.

4. Implementation and monitoring of the Policy

Under the leadership of the Secretary General, the Secretariat's Senior Management will lead implementation efforts specific to the Secretariat and support Member Parliaments in meeting their objectives.

Implementation plans with clear targets, deadlines and budget requirements, will be developed on a biennial basis.

Implementation and monitoring of the policy will require:

- **Continuous improvement:** Following the establishment of a baseline, a series of incremental action plans will be developed for the progressive integration of environmental sustainability considerations into daily practices, activities and management of teams and facilities at the IPU Secretariat and during all IPU Assemblies and events.
- **Evidence and learning:** Current scientific knowledge and understanding will be used in the measurement of impacts, and in decision-making, planning, resource allocation and action to meet objectives in the three action areas.
- **Participation:** A participatory and inclusive approach will be respected for the development of action plans and enforcement efforts.
- **Resourcing:** A biennial budget with the necessary human and financial resources will be developed, to implement and monitor the action plans and achieve the objectives listed above.

5. Reporting and accountability

The Executive Committee and the Governing Council will receive an annual update of progress made in implementing the Policy.

Member Parliaments will be encouraged to share progress, innovations and lessons learned in implementing commitments under this Policy, including during the accountability segment at IPU Assemblies. Voluntary peer-to-peer exchange and self-assessments will support accountability, with the option of developing more formal mechanisms in the future.