



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

Towards effective action for the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Online round table debate for parliamentarians

Monday, 7 September 2026

14:00–16:00 CEST (Geneva time)

BACKGROUND

This round table debate will allow parliamentarians to share real-life examples of how they can take effective action to ensure that the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is realized as a precondition for the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights (ESC) by all.¹ It will showcase concrete parliamentary initiatives – laws, budget allocations, oversight mechanisms and changes to processes and policies within parliament – that have successfully improved access to ESC rights in a time of environmental crises.

The round table will also provide guidance on how parliaments can navigate the challenge of delivering on sustainable development goals (SDGs) and ESC rights in a manner that respects ecological limits by drawing on the expertise of United Nations (UN) human rights treaty body members, including the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), which oversees the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the UN exactly 60 years ago. In particular, experts will share practical insights contained in [General comment No. 27](#) on ESC rights and the environmental dimension of sustainable development, adopted by the CESCR in 2025.

Participants are kindly asked to come prepared to share concrete examples of parliamentary action, challenges encountered and solutions identified, as well as proposals to strengthen cooperation with the UN and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Participants are asked not to read any written statements in order to keep the discussions lively and spontaneous. Requests for the floor can be made from the moment of registration.

This interactive round table will be held online in English, with interpretation in French. Interpretation in Arabic, Russian or Spanish can be arranged if such a request is made up to a week before the date of the event.

PROGRAMME

Monday, 7 September 2026

14:00

Welcoming remarks by Mr. Simon Moutquin, former Belgian Parliamentarian and Rapporteur to the Council of Europe on the right to a clean and safe environment

14:10–14:45

Introductory session

This session will highlight how parliaments have become more effective in fulfilling their obligations with regard to the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and ensuring that all people under their jurisdiction have access to ESC rights in a context marked by accelerating climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss with the help of guidance from UN human rights treaty bodies.

Participants will share practical experiences of passing new laws, changing parliamentary policies, strengthening oversight and shaping budgets to realize ESC rights to the maximum of available resources, with a focus on action taken to respect, protect and fulfil the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Participants are also

¹ These rights include the right to health, education, work, social security and to an adequate standard of living, but also equality and non-discrimination principles that are all affected by the triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

encouraged to share their insights related to green budgeting and climate proof legislative action among other tools, as well as a human rights based approach to action for climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The focus will be on what has worked, what obstacles were encountered and how parliamentarians can partner more effectively with UN mechanisms to achieve lasting results.

Moderator: Ms. Tanya Awad Ghorra, Board member of Adyan Foundation

Discussants:

- **Ms. Isabel Cristina Zuleta López**, Member of the Senate of Colombia (TBC)
 - **Ms. Joo-Young Lee**, Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
 - **Mr. Christophe Golay**, Director of FIAN Switzerland and former Senior Research Fellow at the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights
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Interactive discussion

14:45–15:45

After the introductory session, parliamentarians will be able to make comments and ask questions to the discussants, as well as exchange their own experiences in taking action for making parliaments more effective in fulfilling their obligations with regard to the right to ESC rights with a focus on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The discussion will centre on:

- Concrete steps taken in parliament: passing laws to protect, defend and fulfil the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment; ensuring its implementation; allocating resources; conducting oversight; amending parliamentary procedures; and working with human rights institutions, civil society, environmental rights defenders and affected populations, including Indigenous peoples, peasants and rural communities.
 - The main challenges faced; the strategies that helped overcome obstacles, including the challenges of pollution and extreme weather events exacerbated by unsustainable levels of production and consumption as well as protracted humanitarian crises and armed conflicts; and opportunities to build stronger engagement with UN treaty bodies for greater impact.
 - Identifying practical measures through which the IPU could enhance its support to parliaments in promoting and protecting the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
 - Lessons learned and tentative strategies for continued engagement in the future.
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15:45–15:50

Closing reflections and next steps

During this final segment, the moderator will summarize key recommendations emerging from the debate and participants will be invited to indicate one concrete action they intend to pursue. Also, the IPU will outline how it can support follow-up efforts.