



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

## Effective institutions and participatory decision-making: A reflection on the role of parliaments

Church Center (1<sup>st</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup>), 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, 777 UN Plaza, New York

10 a.m. to 12 p.m., 18 July 2019

### Concept note

As the most recent report of the UN Secretary-General<sup>1</sup> shows, much remains to be done to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Political leadership is key to accelerating progress towards the goals.

SDG 16 recognizes the significance of effective institutions, including parliaments, for the realization of the entire set of SDGs. Parliaments are a central part of the State mechanism that aims to ensure a constant focus in public policy on the well-being of the people, and the ability to take corrective action where necessary.

The review of SDG 16 during the High-Level Political Forum provides an opportunity to focus attention on progress towards SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7, which aim respectively at building *effective, accountable and transparent institutions* and ensuring *responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making*.

These targets are central concerns for parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Parliaments are responsible for creating the legal framework for effective institutions. They set the rules for decision-making processes and, through their legislative role, are the core national decision-making body. At the same time, parliaments have a duty of exemplarity in embodying these principles in the work of parliament itself.

For its part, the IPU works for strong, democratic parliaments, through its standard-setting and capacity-building activities in a range of areas. The IPU defines a democratic parliament as one that is representative, open, accessible, accountable and effective. At the heart of a democratic parliament is its capacity to respond to the needs of different groups in

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<sup>1</sup> [Report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals \(Special Edition\)](https://undocs.org/E/2019/68), <https://undocs.org/E/2019/68>

society, in particular women and men from all walks of life. With this in mind, the IPU has developed standards for gender-sensitive parliaments that focus on the number of women in parliament and the positions they occupy, the gender-responsiveness of policies, structures and infrastructure of parliament, as well as the working environment and culture. The IPU has also developed standards for youth participation in parliament and their effective contribution to policy-making. Effective and inclusive decision-making processes require institutions themselves to be responsive and provide space for every voice to be heard.

The session will aim to take stock of progress towards achieving SDGs 16.6 and 16.7, with a particular focus on SDG global indicator 16.7.1 (a)<sup>2</sup>, of which IPU is the custodian, which tracks the representation of women and young people in decision-making positions in parliament.

Drawing on this data and examples from parliaments, a moderated round table will examine the role of parliaments in building effective institutions and enhancing participatory decision-making. This discussion will be placed in the broader context of efforts to achieve the SDGs overall.

The session will address the following questions:

- What is the current state of representation of women and young people in decision-making positions in parliament?
- How do women and youth shape the parliamentary environment and outputs?
- What should parliaments do to accelerate progress towards SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7?
- How to determine if parliaments are becoming more effective and inclusive institutions?
- In what ways do effective institutions and participatory decision-making contribute to the achievement of the entire set of SDGs?

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<sup>2</sup> SDG global indicator 16.7.1 (a): Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in national legislatures compared to national distributions