



Second Regional Seminar for Parliaments of the Caribbean: Strengthening parliamentary action on the Sustainable Development Goals

Port of Spain (Trinidad and Tobago), 5 and 6 December 2019

Organized jointly by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago
and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in September 2015 by the United Nations General Assembly as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The SDGs are a comprehensive policy framework that could help better coordinate national policies towards a common vision for humanity where no one is left behind. The framework consists of 17 goals and 169 targets, which are available at sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs.

Parliamentary involvement in the implementation of the SDGs has been a key priority for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) since the goals were adopted. Legislatures can translate the SDGs into enforceable domestic laws and regulations through the core parliamentary functions of law-making, oversight, representation and budgetary powers. Parliaments can also hold governments accountable for the goals they have subscribed to, ensure that adequate financial resources are allocated to achieve the SDGs, and ensure meaningful national ownership.

In order to promote awareness about the SDGs, strengthen parliamentary capacities and foster regional cooperation, the IPU regularly organizes regional and interregional seminars and summits for parliaments. The first regional seminar for parliaments of the Caribbean took place in Paramaribo (Suriname) on 5 and 6 November 2018 and was jointly organized by the IPU and the National Assembly of Suriname. The seminar allowed parliamentarians from the Caribbean to learn more about the important role of legislators in operationalizing the Paris Agreement on climate change and to discuss ways of improving responses to natural disasters and preventing damage.

At the end of the seminar the participants adopted the Paramaribo Declaration on Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction. Through the Declaration, they agreed that parliaments should increase their use of oversight mechanisms, such as parliamentary hearings, question time and plenary reports, to assess the impact of government policies and programmes through a collaborative approach. Participants also stated that parliaments should take more robust and concerted actions to respond to climate change by optimizing their legislative and oversight roles, and also by enhancing cooperation and partnership in order to share information and experiences on the regional and global levels.

The second regional seminar will give parliaments the opportunity to build on the recommendations of the first. Legislators will be able to discuss what parliaments in the Caribbean region have done about climate change, its impact on health and the role of parliaments in health emergency preparedness and response. The seminar will also showcase good practices in terms of introducing, managing and sharing innovation in parliament as a way for parliamentary institutions to become more transparent, accountable and effective.

Format, objectives and expected outcomes of the seminar

There will be a series of plenary panel discussions led by relevant regional and international experts. The overall aim of the seminar is to have parliaments from the Caribbean share experiences, discuss challenges

and engage in comprehensive discussions on the most efficient ways to strengthen parliamentary action towards realizing the SDGs by 2030. It is expected that the seminar will conclude with a declaration outlining key issues discussed and making forward-looking recommendations for parliaments to effectively advance national and regional implementation of the SDGs.

The seminar will be followed by a field visit organized by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Venue and dates: Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 5 and 6 December 2019

Draft agenda: The agenda will be developed jointly by the IPU and the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Participation: The seminar is open to the following national parliaments: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The legislative bodies of Turks and Caicos Islands, Cayman Islands, Bermuda and British Virgin Islands will be invited to attend as observers.

Working language: English.