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Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [72/278](#), the present report serves to build on a history of interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and parliamentary organizations. That interaction has provided a solid foundation for the advancement of common objectives across the spectrum of United Nations mandates and activities. The report, which is the fifth of its kind, comes at a time that is characterized by socioeconomic disparities, competing visions of the international order, and global challenges that are leaving indelible marks on future generations. Today's highly networked world grapples with many cross-boundary threats, not least the global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic which, at the time of writing, has affected many facets of political, economic and social life across the globe. At the same time, consensus on how to mitigate risks is lacking. Examples range from our collective response to pandemics and climate change and our efforts to manage the disruptive impact of digital technologies to our fragmented approach to the mass displacement of people.

2. In 2020, the international community is embarking on the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals to accelerate sustainable solutions to the world's biggest challenges. It is also honouring major landmarks, including the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It therefore has a good opportunity to take stock of the progress made towards its long-term goals, make course corrections as necessary, and step up collective efforts. The reformed United Nations system is committed to playing its full part in a more unified, responsive and accountable manner.

3. In that context, parliaments worldwide can play an important role in helping the United Nations and Member States to scale up their response to global challenges. Through their legislative and budgetary oversight and representative duties,



parliaments can enact legislation that translates international commitments into national policies, strengthening inclusive and accountable approaches to their implementation. Likewise, parliaments can engage systematically with the United Nations system across the three pillars of the Organization: peace and security, human rights, and development.

4. Indeed, in resolution [72/278](#), the General Assembly recognized the growing role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs in providing a platform for regular interaction between parliamentarians and United Nations officials, reviewing implementation of international commitments, facilitating closer ties between the United Nations country teams and national parliaments and helping to shape parliamentary input to major United Nations processes. The fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, to be organized by IPU in close cooperation with the United Nations and the parliament of Austria in August 2020, on the theme “Parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for people and the planet”, will further strengthen the strategic partnership between the United Nations and IPU.

5. In the present report, the breadth and scope of interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and IPU are outlined, with a special focus on best practices to support the role of parliaments in translating international commitments into national policies, as requested in resolution [72/278](#). The report also covers the Organization’s engagement with other parliamentary organizations. Since the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is central to the efforts of the United Nations system, the report is organized in accordance with the broad categories of thematic support for the implementation of the Goals. Section II contains examples of direct cooperation between national parliaments and the United Nations system aimed at the attainment of specific Goals and the 2030 Agenda more broadly. Section III provides a description of the collaboration between the United Nations, IPU and other parliamentary organizations. Section IV provides a description of the partnerships, interactions and knowledge products guiding the wide-ranging collaboration between the United Nations, parliaments and parliamentary organizations. Section V contains conclusions and recommendations on the way forward.

II. The United Nations and national parliaments: direct support provided to parliaments and parliamentarians

A. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

6. The United Nations has prioritized strengthening the capacity of parliaments, given their critical role in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Following the repositioning of the United Nations development system, newly empowered resident coordinators have supported parliaments worldwide in taking action on the Goals. As a provider of technical assistance to more than 70 parliaments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been working to enhance the capacities of parliaments to oversee the integration of the 2030 Agenda into national development planning. This engagement cuts across the Goals, with a particular emphasis on the participation of women (Goal 5) and other underrepresented populations, the improvement of governance and oversight (Goal 16), the fulfilment of international obligations at the national level, and the development of stronger partnerships, including on climate and the financing of the Goals (Goals 13 and 17).

7. For instance, in Georgia, UNDP has supported the parliament in introducing multi-year strategic action plans that incorporate the relevant Goals, facilitate a structured approach to the work of parliamentary committees and help to improve oversight. In Mexico, UNDP has supported the Senate in assessing its legislative capacities and creating a task force that coordinates and oversees the implementation of the Goals. In Angola, Bangladesh, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Serbia and Timor-Leste, UNDP has worked with parliaments and other key stakeholders to improve access to public financial information and other data relating to the Goals in order to improve transparency and support better oversight of public financial management. In Fiji, following a workshop facilitated by UNDP, the national parliament aligned the terms of reference of its standing committees with the Goals to monitor progress against the Government's national five-year plan. In Nepal and Pakistan, UNDP has worked with national and subnational parliaments to strengthen oversight of expenditure under financing instruments relating to the climate and the Goals.

8. In furtherance of the 2030 Agenda, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has engaged parliamentarians in voluntary national reviews. Among other activities, in July 2019, the Department organized a "VNR Lab" during the high-level political forum on sustainable development to engage all branches and levels of government, including parliaments, in the implementation of the Goals. The event served to highlight best practices in collaboration across organizational boundaries between ministries, agencies and other public institutions, through interlinked policies and initiatives.

9. Parliamentarians were also an important target audience for many of the activities undertaken by the Department of Global Communications and its network of United Nations information centres. The centres have worked with national parliaments and parliamentary groups to highlight the work of the United Nations and to engage them in the implementation of key agendas, including the Goals. The information centre in Ukraine organized a photographic exhibition at the parliament, featuring national celebrities and aimed at building awareness of the Goals. The information centre in Georgia supported the national parliament in holding a conference on the theme of the 2030 Agenda. At the event, the President of the parliament, the Secretary-General of IPU and the Resident Coordinator briefed 150 local stakeholders on the challenges and opportunities associated with sustainable development and on how to create synergies to promote the Goals.

B. Democracy and human rights

10. Collaboration with parliaments has also provided opportunities to advance democratic governance and respect for human rights, which are essential to achieving the Goals. On the basis of responses to a questionnaire sent by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to Member States, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders, the Human Rights Council in May 2018 issued a comprehensive report on the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review ([A/HRC/38/25](#)).

11. In Somalia, the United Nations continued to assist the Federal Parliament and state parliaments in strengthening their institutional capacity to perform core functions. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia and UNDP assisted the Federal Parliament in revising the Provisional Federal Constitution and provided continued assistance with regard to national elections, in collaboration with the National Independent Electoral Commission. In addition, the United Nations conducted outreach on the Electoral Code to promote a minimum quota of 30 per cent for the representation of women.

12. The United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) provided technical advice to the National People's Assembly on integrating international standards into domestic legislation. UNIOGBIS also provided support to the parliament with regard to: (a) the preparation and validation of Guinea-Bissau's report for the third cycle of the universal periodic review; (b) the review of the draft Military Justice Code to ensure compliance with international human rights standards; (c) assistance to the parliamentary commission responsible for organizing a national conference on the consolidation of peace and development; and (d) assistance to parliamentarians and the Specialized Commission for Women and Children in reviewing draft legislation on the participation of women in policymaking and decision-making.

C. Gender equality and the empowerment and political participation of women

13. Achieving gender equality and empowering women, including as legislators in parliaments, are fundamental to delivering on the 2030 Agenda. In Afghanistan, through continued engagement with secretariats and directorates of the National Assembly, United Nations advocacy efforts have focused on promoting gender equality and the participation of women in political processes. Today, women occupy 69 of the 250 seats in the lower house. This exceeds the electoral quota of 68 seats reserved for women under the Constitution and, for the first time, includes one directly elected woman, from Daykundi Province. In the upper house, 19 of the 68 seats are occupied by women. Of those female senators, 16 were appointed by the President. The other three continue to occupy the seats allocated to the provincial council representatives from Jowzjan, Badakhshan and Daykundi. Since the 2018 parliamentary elections, there has also been a 27 per cent increase in the representation of women in the secretariat structures of the two chambers. Although the lower house adopted a nine-point resolution in support of women's rights in November 2019, legislation such as the Law on the Elimination of Violence against Women is still pending review.

14. Similarly, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) has been promoting the political and electoral participation of women in the region, in cooperation with national parliaments. UNOWAS consulted parliaments in the region for a study on the political participation of women and involved female parliamentarians from Cape Verde in the organization of the open day on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) held in Praia in 2018. UNOWAS supported an association of women parliamentarians from Mauritania in conducting awareness-raising, training and advocacy during the elections of 2019. In partnership with the African Union and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), UNOWAS facilitated the Group of Five for the Sahel conference of women parliamentarians held in N'Djamena in 2018, with a focus on preventing violent extremism. In collaboration with UN-Women, UNOWAS enabled female parliamentarians from 16 countries to participate in the activities of the Working Group on Women, Youth, Peace and Security in West Africa and the Sahel.

15. Through the International Cooperation Working Group on Gender, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia (UNVMC) has participated in dialogue with the congressional commission for the equality of women to promote gender equality under the national development plan and other legal frameworks, including those related to the peace agreement. Targeted efforts have also been undertaken by UNDP in several countries. In Bhutan, for instance, UNDP support for the newly formed Women's Parliamentary Caucus helped to generate several recommendations

on ways to strengthen the political participation of women. In Maldives, UNDP supported the parliament during the passage of legislation on decentralization, which included temporary special measures to increase the representation of women at the local level. In Kyrgyzstan, Montenegro, Myanmar, Nepal, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, UNDP has also been working with the national parliaments to advance the women and peace and security agenda.

D. International peace and security

16. There has been a sustained interest among members of national and regional parliaments in disarmament and the related work of the United Nations. At the global level, the Office for Disarmament Affairs promotes the universalization of several disarmament conventions by working closely with parliamentarians in States not parties to such conventions, as well as with relevant parliamentary organizations, such as IPU, Parliamentarians for Global Action and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament. Those interactions have played a key role in recent ratifications of and accessions to conventions, such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction (Biological Weapons Convention), which has been ratified by the Central African Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania and acceded to by Samoa.

17. The Office for Disarmament Affairs also works closely with parliamentarians at the regional and national levels, including through a project initiated in 2019 that is focused on armed violence and illicit small arms trafficking with a gender perspective. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific has provided capacity-building support in South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific for parliamentarians and non-governmental organizations working on the women and peace and security agenda, gun control and reduction of the gendered impacts of armed violence.

18. Engagement with parliamentarians is also an important aspect of United Nations support for the implementation of peace agreements. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has increased its interaction with parliamentarians to strengthen their ownership of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali and to advance the implementation of the Agreement. To that end, throughout 2019, MINUSMA organized capacity-building workshops on security sector reform, human rights and legislative drafting. In 2018 and 2019, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali provided three briefings to specialized commissions of the parliament regarding the Mission's mandate and the implementation of the Agreement. Subsequently, an ad hoc parliamentary working group to monitor and assess the implementation of the Agreement was established, and the first parliamentary report on the topic was launched.

19. In Colombia, since the signing of the peace agreement between the Government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) in November 2016, Congress has played an increasingly active role, beyond holding debates and approving legislation on the implementation of the peace agreement. Since 2018, the Peace Commissions of both chambers of Congress have visited former combatant reintegration areas and conflict-affected regions, with support from UNVMC. Lawmakers have engaged directly with former combatants undergoing reintegration, as well as social leaders, local authorities and communities. This has enabled them to witness first-hand the progress and challenges associated with the implementation of the agreement, including in the two areas covered by the mandate of UNVMC, namely the reintegration process and security guarantees for

communities. Furthermore, UNVMC has maintained dialogue with lawmakers. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Colombia and Head of UNVMC has met regularly with members of Congress to brief them on the implementation of the peace agreement. Members of Congress also met with the Security Council during its visit to Colombia in 2019 to share their views on the implementation of the peace agreement.

20. Similarly, in support of the implementation of the peace agreement in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has been promoting awareness-raising initiatives for parliamentarians. MINUSCA also facilitates dialogue between parliamentarians, local authorities and armed groups. In addition, it provides technical support to commissions of the National Assembly in their review of bills, including those pertaining to decentralization, local governance and the status of former Heads of State, political parties and the opposition.

21. In Papua New Guinea, under the auspices of the Resident Coordinator, the Peacebuilding Fund has helped since 2018 to enhance political dialogue between the national Government and the government of Bougainville and also between the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives, ensuring that decisions on the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and on the referendum are taken in parallel. The Fund supported the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives in the signing of a parliamentary partnership agreement in September 2019 to further enhance cooperation between the two parliaments. The Liaison Officer in the Office of the Resident Coordinator continues to promote open dialogue at the parliamentary level in support of an action plan for the implementation of the parliamentary partnership agreement.

E. Other areas of collaboration

22. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as part of its rule of law and anti-corruption activities, has encouraged the National Assembly to adopt integrity, accountability and transparency measures, advocating full adherence by parliamentarians to the Asset Declaration Law and accountability in relation to criminal acts. UNAMA monitors legislative work and reports developments in its annual anti-corruption report. Under the project for institutional and capacity support to the parliament of Afghanistan, UNDP has provided technical assistance to secretariats and directorates of the National Assembly to implement IPU standards for increased public access to legislative information. This has included support for publishing the status of bills, laws and other parliamentary resources through the legislative tracking system.

23. Throughout the reporting period, the contributions of parliamentarians have been highlighted by the Department of Global Communications in multilingual news and feature outputs across various platforms, including social media and digital outlets. The Department also hosts a website in the six official languages of the United Nations to commemorate the International Day of Parliamentarism on 30 June. The website is updated each year to reflect activities and events associated with the commemoration, as well as relevant background information.

III. The United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and other parliamentary organizations: advancing global norms

24. As the world organization of national parliaments, IPU remains a key vehicle for supporting the engagement of national parliaments in the work of the United

Nations. IPU and other parliamentary organizations provide national parliaments with information on relevant processes, raise awareness of global norms, mobilize support for the implementation of international commitments and provide a platform for regular interaction between parliamentarians and United Nations entities. They also assist parliaments with technical tools in specialized areas related to the implementation of global agendas. In that connection, IPU is building on its wide-ranging membership and global reach and is working closely with the United Nations system on a range of issues. In accordance with resolution 72/278, it has been working regularly with Member States in facilitating a parliamentary component to major United Nations conferences. In addition, United Nations entities collaborate with other international, regional and subregional parliamentary forums, which help to shape parliamentary input to major United Nations processes.

A. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda

25. During the 2018–2020 biennium, IPU undertook a wide range of activities aimed at promoting greater awareness of the Goals and fostering parliamentary cooperation in support of the 2030 Agenda. The 138th IPU Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution entitled “Sustaining peace as a vehicle for achieving sustainable development”. In the resolution, the Assembly welcomed the substantively identical resolutions on sustaining peace adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council and called on all parliaments to contribute to the implementation of the concept of sustaining peace and the Goals. With the aim of mainstreaming the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the work of parliaments, IPU organized a series of regional seminars involving parliaments and United Nations representatives from the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Caribbean, the Twelve Plus Group and the Asia-Pacific region. Those events offered a platform for participants to share experiences, identify challenges and opportunities, exchange best practices, and discuss concrete options for achieving the Goals at the national and regional levels.

26. In keeping with the request of the General Assembly to facilitate a parliamentary component to major United Nations conferences, IPU has participated actively in various initiatives aimed at advancing the 2030 Agenda. As a member of the Steering Committee of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, IPU has participated in meetings of the Committee, supporting the establishment of the new Business Leaders Caucus, helping to define new indicators of progress on development cooperation and contributing to the review of Goal 17. In January 2019, IPU participated as an observer in the first meeting of the reconstituted Sustainable Development Goal Strategy Hub, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

27. UNDP and IPU have continued to provide technical support to national parliaments on the basis of the IPU/UNDP publication *Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Self-Assessment Toolkit*. Several parliaments have assessed their capacity to localize the Goals, including the parliaments of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka, and similar exercises are planned for Argentina, Jordan, Maldives, Somalia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Tunisia. UNDP, maintaining its strong collaboration with parliamentary organizations, has further supported the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum in strengthening the work of its oversight committee on the adoption by the parliaments of member States of model laws on elections, HIV/AIDS and the prevention of child marriage.

28. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has also been collaborating with IPU in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Senior representatives

of IPU have been actively engaged in the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the follow-up to and review of the 2030 Agenda, as well as discussions regarding the outcomes of major United Nations conferences on sustainable development. Prior to the high-level political forums held in 2018 and 2019, IPU surveyed the parliaments of the countries participating in voluntary national reviews, encouraging greater parliamentary engagement in that key monitoring process and drawing attention to the role of parliaments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The surveys revealed that no more than a third of parliaments were engaged in the voluntary national review process, suggesting that parliamentary oversight of the Goals remained weak. As a contribution to the high-level political forum in 2018, IPU promoted the participation of some 90 parliamentarians in the main proceedings and organized a side event on environmental sustainability. During the high-level political forum in 2019, IPU organized a parliamentary forum and co-organized two other side events with UNDP and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on assessing the capacity of parliaments to institutionalize the Goals and on statelessness, respectively.

29. National parliamentarians and IPU, building on their engagement in the Development Cooperation Forum, have helped to advance the strategic role of development cooperation in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. As a global platform, the Forum facilitates knowledge generation and capacity development for parliamentarians in support of their vital oversight role in the international development cooperation processes of their countries. Since 2008, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through Forum surveys, has collected data on the extent to which parliaments are included in policymaking on national development cooperation, with the aim of improving the evidence base and incentivizing the inclusion of parliamentarians for improved transparency and accountability.

30. Similarly, through the World Investment Forum, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has provided a global platform for reviewing progress in the implementation of the Goals and mobilizing additional resources to promote action aimed at the attainment of the Goals, while sharing effective policies and best practices. The sixth Forum, held in October 2018, brought together over 6,000 representatives of the public and private sectors, civil society and academia, including 70 parliamentarians. Several high-level sessions were organized in collaboration with IPU, including a session on the role of lawmakers in creating a conducive environment for investment and financing aimed at the attainment of the Goals.

B. Climate change

31. IPU and the parliament of Poland organized a parliamentary meeting at the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The meeting was attended by some 200 parliamentarians from more than 50 countries. Parliamentarians examined the legal frameworks needed to implement the Paris Agreement and create enabling environments for climate-related investments. Highlighting best practices, they stressed the importance of regular reviews of national commitments on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in keeping with the latest scientific knowledge, as well as the monitoring of emissions and the verification of measures taken by Governments.

32. IPU and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have launched a project to build the capacity of parliamentarians to accelerate the implementation of

the Paris Agreement and the nationally determined contributions. To date, IPU and UNEP have jointly organized three national workshops on promoting parliamentary engagement on climate change, in Burundi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. IPU worked to facilitate the participation of a parliamentary group in a symposium to be organized in Bali by the Development Cooperation Forum on advancing development cooperation to address climate risk and resilience.

C. Democracy and human rights

33. In line with the recommendations issued by the Human Rights Council in 2018, IPU helped parliaments to engage in the universal periodic review in 2018 and organized side events to highlight the experiences of parliamentarians with regard to the protection and promotion of human rights. In September 2018, IPU further contributed to a side event organized by the Permanent Mission of Ecuador during the thirty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council, which focused on the impact of corruption on the full enjoyment of human rights.

34. In November 2018, OHCHR, with IPU support, organized the second session of the Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law. The Forum was chaired by the Secretary-General of IPU and was attended by government officials, parliamentarians, civil society representatives and academics. That collaboration led to the identification of good examples of parliamentary engagement on human rights, challenges for parliaments in that area and ways to address them, as well as further avenues for cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments. In June 2019, IPU and OHCHR organized a seminar on the theme “Parliamentary engagement on human rights: identifying good practices and new opportunities for action”; a follow-up event is scheduled for the first half of 2020.

D. Gender equality and the empowerment and political participation of women

35. United Nations entities and IPU have been mobilizing political support to accelerate the implementation of the global agenda set out in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#) on women and peace and security. IPU has contributed to a series of initiatives organized by UNDP at the regional and national levels, including in the Pacific region, Georgia and Serbia, sharing insights on gender-sensitive parliaments and the role of parliaments in combating sexism and gender-based violence.

36. IPU has also pursued its programmatic collaboration with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), providing technical support to the parliaments of Colombia, Turkey and the United Republic of Tanzania on issues related to gender equality and the political empowerment of women. The annual parliamentary meeting organized by IPU and UN-Women was held in New York in March 2019, during the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and highlighted issues related to social protection, public services and infrastructure for women and girls. IPU took part in the Expert Group Meeting on Data and Violence Against Women in Politics convened by UN-Women in December 2019, at which representatives shared good practices on countering sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament.

37. IPU has continued to promote the role of parliaments in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. To that end, in October 2018, IPU organized a workshop on the economic empowerment of women, at which parliamentarians from Africa, the Americas, the Arab region and

the Pacific participated. Furthermore, IPU communicated the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to the parliaments of the countries under review. At the seventy-fourth and seventy-fifth sessions of the Committee, IPU submitted reports on the political participation of women and held working sessions with the Committee on how to facilitate the contribution of parliaments to the implementation of the Convention. National seminars aimed at advancing the implementation of the Convention at the national level through the engagement of parliaments have been held in Djibouti, Kenya and Turkey. Following sustained efforts by IPU and other stakeholders, a growing number of parliaments have indicated their commitment to following up on the Committee's recommendations in order to enhance national implementation of the Convention.

38. Representatives of UN-Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination took part in the twelfth Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, which was co-hosted by IPU and the Chamber of Deputies of the Plurinational State of Bolivia in April 2018. In the Cochabamba Declaration, the Summit participants affirmed the link between the equal participation of women in politics and more prosperous, peaceful and inclusive societies, and called for the adoption and implementation of specific legislation to combat violence against women in politics. In June 2019, IPU, OHCHR, UN-Women, International Gender Champions and a number of permanent missions to the United Nations Office at Geneva organized a special event on the margins of the forty-first session of the Human Rights Council on the theme "Legislating for gender equality: eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence by 2030", which was attended by many parliamentarians.

39. The National Assembly of Mali has continued its cooperation with IPU on the implementation of the Goals. The parliamentary committee overseeing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda has interacted regularly with members of the Government and has assessed national progress on the Goals. Following a workshop on gender parity and the Goals, which was organized by the National Assembly and IPU, the Government adopted a law in which a quota of 30 per cent was established for women holding elective office in public institutions.

E. International peace and security

40. The Office for Disarmament Affairs has been able to promote a number of global norms on disarmament and other key peace and security issues through its recent work with parliaments. For example, it has partnered successfully with Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament to engage legislators worldwide in steps towards nuclear disarmament, especially in the context of the open-ended working group on multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations established under General Assembly resolution [70/33](#), as well as with Parliamentarians for Global Action in support of its global campaign for universalization and implementation of the Biological Weapons Convention and Security Council resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). Parliamentarians for Global Action has contributed significantly to recent ratifications and accessions to the Biological Weapons Convention and to the submission of national reports pursuant to resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#). During the reporting period, the Office for Disarmament Affairs and IPU, in collaboration with the House of Representatives of New Zealand, co-organized two regional seminars for the parliaments of Pacific island States on the implementation of resolution [1540 \(2004\)](#) and on the Biological Weapons Convention, providing a platform for parliamentarians to exchange experiences and best practice.

41. The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation, which is administered by the Office for Disarmament Affairs, has funded two projects undertaken by Parliamentarians for Global Action aimed at advancing the efforts of

parliamentarians with regard to the implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The projects covered the meaningful and effective participation of women parliamentarians in the defence, security and interior committees of national legislative bodies and benefited parliamentarians from African and Pacific island States, Central America, the Caribbean, South Asia and the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries throughout 2018 and 2019. The United Nations Trust Facility Supporting Cooperation on Arms Regulation previously financed projects of Parliamentarians for Global Action to promote the ratification and implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty in Portuguese-speaking countries through parliamentary advocacy and policymaking efforts. These efforts directly contributed to the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty by Brazil, Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique in 2018, as well as the decision of the Government of Sao Tome and Principe in 2019 to ratify the Treaty.

42. The Office for Disarmament Affairs is supporting parliamentary organizations in highlighting best practices and building cooperation for the implementation of the Secretary-General's disarmament agenda, *Securing our Common Future: An Agenda for Disarmament*. To that end, the Office has been supporting several parliamentary organizations in organizing an international parliamentary meeting on advancing disarmament to coincide with the annual United Nations-IPU parliamentary hearing in 2020. The outcomes of the meeting will be incorporated into a guide for parliamentarians on implementing the *Agenda for Disarmament*.

43. At the 139th IPU Assembly, the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security organized a panel discussion on comprehensive disarmament and non-proliferation. At the event, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research briefed delegations on new weapons technologies and the role that parliamentarians could play in implementing the *Agenda for Disarmament*, particularly with regard to developing appropriate regulations, incentivizing responsible technological innovation, and ensuring transparency and accountability.

44. Parliaments also play a central role in preventing terrorism, as they are responsible for law-making, policy-setting, budget allocation and oversight with regard to national security issues. The engagement of parliaments is crucial for addressing the conditions conducive to terrorism through a whole-of-society approach and for ensuring that laws are implemented effectively, with full respect for human rights. To support national parliaments in the implementation of the international legal framework for combating terrorism, as well as other relevant international and regional instruments, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and IPU have initiated a joint programme on countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The programme is aimed at strengthening the capacity of parliamentarians to develop and implement comprehensive legal and operational responses to terrorism and violent extremism. As part of that capacity-building process, IPU, UNODC and the Office of Counter-Terrorism have convened regional conferences in the Middle East, North Africa and the Sahel.

F. Health

45. One of the major areas of collaboration between the United Nations and parliamentary organizations is the mobilization of parliamentary support for health. In September 2019, IPU, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNDP and Georgetown University launched the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Legal Solutions Network. The initiative promotes strong legal frameworks in support of universal health coverage. IPU and WHO organized a parliamentary seminar and a technical briefing on universal health coverage to coincide with the World Health Assembly in 2019. A similar briefing on universal health coverage was provided by WHO at the annual United Nations-IPU parliamentary hearing in 2019. In October 2019, the IPU Assembly adopted a resolution entitled “Achieving universal health coverage by 2030: the role of parliaments in ensuring the right to health”. IPU helped to disseminate a survey to parliamentarians and provided the results as input to the negotiations on the political declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage.

46. In May 2018, in support of the achievement of Goal 3 and other goals relating to universal health coverage, UNAIDS supported the Pan-African Parliament in the adoption of a ground-breaking resolution on the role of parliamentarians in realizing the right to health and achieving health targets in Africa. The resolution was disseminated to national and regional parliaments on the continent.

47. UNAIDS has continued its cooperation with other parliamentary organizations. In July 2019, in partnership with the Republic of Congo and the Pan-African Parliament, it convened the High-Level Pan-African Summit on HIV and Health Financing. The Summit concluded with the unanimous adoption of a high-level communiqué, in which the participants called for stronger political commitment and accountability to achieve HIV targets as part of a comprehensive health agenda. UNAIDS, which advocates stronger parliamentary engagement to end AIDS, provided additional support to the 141st IPU Assembly and the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of la Francophonie held in 2019.

G. Other areas of collaboration

48. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has sought to strengthen collaboration with parliamentarians at the national, regional and global levels to promote the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and Goal 11 on inclusive, safe and sustainable cities. UN-Habitat, IPU and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association encouraged parliamentarians to participate in the tenth session of the World Urban Forum, held in February 2020. The URBAN Intergroup of the European Parliament, the European Commission and UN-Habitat also held a high-level policy session in November 2019 to explore practical tools for implementing sustainable urban policies as a driver of development.

49. The General Assembly, in resolution [72/278](#), invited IPU to play a role in the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies. At the end of a two-year preparatory process, IPU convened a parliamentary meeting to coincide with the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, held in Morocco in December 2018. The Conference concluded with the adoption of a political declaration in which parliamentarians pledged to help to implement the Global Compact by promoting fact-based political discourse, devising appropriate policies and legislation, exercising parliamentary scrutiny of such policies and legislation, and promoting regional and international dialogue.

50. During the reporting period, IPU advocated increased youth representation in politics and decision-making through a number of initiatives. At the fifth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, approximately 130 young parliamentarians from 43 countries explored ways to prioritize youth empowerment in relation to environmental protection, sustainable consumption and production. The sixth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians focused on policymaking for youth empowerment, with young parliamentarians presenting case studies from around the world on relevant policies, budgets and legislation. In addition, in April 2019, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth co-hosted the Economic and Social Council Youth Forum, where a member of the Board of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians spoke on the role of young parliamentarians in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

51. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction has worked closely with parliaments and parliamentarians to advocate disaster-risk-sensitive development, including through briefings by special representatives of the Secretary-General and technical-level consultations with parliamentarians, as well as meetings held on the margins of the sixth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in 2019, and the 141st IPU Assembly. Parliamentarians expressed appreciation for the opportunities to learn from the Office, experts and their peers, and elaborated on the challenges of shifting public policy from disaster management to prevention, risk reduction and resilience-building. Parliamentarians further undertook to raise public awareness on those issues and to reduce disaster risk by means of legislation, budget allocation and oversight. The Office's targeted engagement with parliamentary organizations and other partners, such as the European Commission, IPU and ParlAmericas, has resulted in parliamentary decisions, such as the European Parliament's decision to incorporate a requirement for disaster risk legislation covering sustainable finance into the European Union's action plan on building a capital markets union, which had legal implications in 28 European countries.

IV. Partnerships and knowledge production

A. Partnerships, senior-level interactions and specialized meetings

52. Efforts to promote strategic interaction between the United Nations and IPU have been undertaken at the highest level and include meetings of the Secretary-General of the United Nations with the President and the Secretary-General of IPU to discuss areas of shared interest, such as parliamentary support to address major humanitarian crises and joint efforts by IPU and the United Nations to combat terrorism and violent extremism. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva represented the Secretary-General at the 141st IPU Assembly held in October 2019. She also represented him at the first and second meetings of the Preparatory Committee for the fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, where she highlighted the role of the partnership between IPU and the United Nations in advancing global commitments and strengthening multilateralism.

53. In close coordination with the Special Adviser on the Preparations for the Commemoration of the United Nations Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, the President and the Secretary-General of IPU invited parliaments to participate actively in the UN75 campaign and related processes. In particular, parliamentarians were asked to participate in the global survey being conducted as part of the UN75 campaign and to hold public debates on the need for a stronger multilateral system. To that end, the annual United Nations-IPU parliamentary hearing held in February 2020 featured a special segment on the UN75 campaign, with the Special Adviser as the main presenter. That initiative and other similar initiatives are intended to mobilize

parliaments for the high-level meeting to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations at the opening of the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly.

54. IPU representatives have regularly addressed the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs, as well as major United Nations conferences and high-level events. IPU delegations participated, for example, in the eighth Global Forum of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and the sixth review of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Furthermore, the President and the Secretary-General of IPU and the Head of the Office of the Permanent Observer for IPU to the United Nations have held regular bilateral meetings with senior UN officials. Working-level meetings between staff of IPU and of the United Nations have also been held throughout the reporting period to explore ways to strengthen cooperation.

55. The United Nations, national parliaments, IPU and other parliamentary organizations have deepened their collaboration through partnerships, senior-level interactions and specialized meetings. Throughout the 2018–2020 biennium, a growing number of partnerships have enabled those entities to further systematize their interactions and leverage their collective resources for the achievement of common objectives. In April 2018, for example, the Secretary-General of IPU and the Executive Director of UNEP signed a memorandum of understanding with regard to their cooperation on the Goals, especially those related to the environment and climate change. In October 2018, IPU and WHO signed a memorandum of understanding in which their cooperation for the next five years was set out.

56. Similarly, in May 2019, UNODC, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and IPU signed a memorandum of understanding in which their cooperation in the fight against terrorism was formalized. This trilateral agreement represents an acknowledgement of the important role of parliaments and parliamentarians in ensuring the successful implementation of United Nations activities and resolutions on counter-terrorism. A joint secretariat for the two United Nations agencies and IPU has been established. The agreement has also allowed the IPU to become an observer to the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, which aims to improve coordination in global efforts to counter terrorism.

57. At the 141st IPU Assembly in October 2019, parliamentarians endorsed the global compact for progress towards universal health coverage, which enabled IPU to become a member of the International Health Partnership for Universal Health Coverage 2030. In early 2020, IPU and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change also signed a memorandum of understanding, in which their collaboration was formalized.

B. Development of tools and knowledge products

58. To help to guide this wide-ranging collaboration between the United Nations, parliaments and parliamentary organizations, the development of tools and knowledge products has continued. A key output of the joint programme of IPU, UNODC and the Office of Counter-Terrorism on countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism is the establishment and maintenance of the counter-terrorism legal databases, available through the Sharing Electronic Resources on Laws and Crime (SHERLOC) portal. As from late 2019, over 4,500 entries on countering terrorism have been available in the databases, including legislation, treaties, strategies, case law and bibliographical entries. The database of legislation

enables policymakers and lawmakers to have access to a growing body of laws and legal practices from all over the world, which can be used to support legislative drafting in line with the obligations undertaken by Member States under the 19 international counter-terrorism instruments.

59. In recent years, UNDP and IPU have published several guidance tools and knowledge products, including publications such as *Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A Self-Assessment Toolkit*, *Global Parliamentary Report* and *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments*. Since the publication of the self-assessment toolkit, IPU and UNDP have facilitated some 30 workshops at the international, regional and country levels, enabling the implementation of programmatic assistance. Furthermore, UNDP, IPU, UN-Women and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance continue their collaboration on the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, an online platform that supports the political participation of women.

60. The report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on Youth and Human Rights (A/HRC/39/33), issued in June 2018, was informed by a series of IPU activities, publications and recommendations on youth participation in parliaments. Furthermore, the Future Policy Award 2019 put the spotlight on the world's most successful policies on youth empowerment, as part of a global contest co-organized by the World Future Council, UNDP and IPU, with the support of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Youth Policy Labs.

61. Additional materials were developed throughout the reporting period to educate and engage parliamentarians on gender equality, the green economy model and forced labour and to provide them with guidance on those issues. In March 2019, the new "Women in Politics: 2019" world map, produced by IPU and UN-Women, was released at a press conference at United Nations Headquarters in New York. In September 2019, International Gender Champions and IPU also launched the gender-responsive assemblies toolkit, which contains information on initiatives designed to accelerate and sustain gender equality. UNEP and IPU further launched an issue brief on the green economy at the 140th IPU Assembly, held in Qatar. The issue brief, entitled "Shades of green: an introduction to the green economy for parliamentarians", helps parliamentarians to understand the most important elements of the green economy and the policies required to make the transition to a green economy. In addition, at the 141st IPU Assembly, ILO and IPU launched a new handbook for parliamentarians entitled *Eliminating Forced Labour*. It covers practical measures that parliamentarians can take to prevent forced labour, protect victims and ensure access to justice and remedies.

62. As national legislators, parliaments have a vital role to play in promoting investment in sustainable development and setting appropriate regulatory frameworks. For that reason, the findings and recommendations of the investment policy reviews of UNCTAD, which are important tools for improving the investment climate and guiding policy reforms, are generally presented and discussed with parliamentarians before they are finalized.

63. Following consultations between the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and parliamentarians at the sixth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in 2019, and at the 141st IPU Assembly, the Office and IPU are consulting on the development of an advocacy kit and a "training of trainers" programme for parliamentarians. Those tools are aimed at providing parliamentarians with key messages and practical information on policy support and practical disaster risk reduction interventions to accelerate progress towards achieving the Goals.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

64. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda remains the cornerstone of the broad and expanding cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments, IPU and other parliamentary organizations at the country, regional and global levels. Over the past two years, since the previous report on the present topic was issued, United Nations entities have worked closely with parliaments worldwide to help to implement the 2030 Agenda and other global frameworks. Regular exchanges between the United Nations and parliaments worldwide have helped parliamentarians to integrate the 2030 Agenda into national development planning, engage in voluntary national reviews, improve oversight of public financial management and promote gender-sensitive legislation.

65. IPU has also facilitated the participation of parliaments in major United Nations processes; those processes benefit from the diverse perspectives that parliamentarians can offer as direct representatives of the people they serve. The past two years have also seen more systematic interaction, including through strategic exchanges at the senior leadership level. The work of IPU to engage parliaments in the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations is to be particularly highlighted and acknowledged.

66. While there has been a continuous increase in the participation of women in parliaments worldwide, gender parity in parliamentary representation and the empowerment of women are far from being achieved. Over the past two decades, the proportion of women in parliaments has almost doubled, rising from 12.7 per cent in 1999 to 24.5 per cent in October 2019. Temporary special measures, including gender quotas, have proven to be effective in different contexts. In countries in situations of conflict and post-conflict countries that have adopted such measures, the proportion of women in parliament has more than doubled in comparison with those countries where such proactive measures have not been taken (24.3 per cent compared with 10.6 per cent). Nonetheless, discriminatory practices and attitudes among constituents and peers persist, including violence against women participating in or seeking to participate in politics. Violence remains a persistent barrier to the political participation of women and is too often perpetrated publicly, without any accountability.

67. In today's complex global environment, national parliamentarians have a critical role in responding to people's demands. Citizens across the globe, particularly women and young people, feel left out of decision-making, deprived of opportunities and robbed of a sustainable future. The wave of demonstrations witnessed over the past two years illustrates the risk of a growing disconnect and increased mistrust between citizens and institutions. Like their executive counterparts, parliaments have a responsibility to demonstrate that institutions can deliver results and to promote the prosperous, secure and peaceful future envisioned in the 2030 Agenda.

68. The effective discharge of parliamentary responsibilities is crucial in that regard. Parliaments can work with the executive branch of government to deliver on the Goals, scrutinize performance in comparison with national targets and champion the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In relation to other international commitments and obligations, parliaments can help to ensure that the necessary measures are adopted in legislation, budget allocations, policy and administration.

69. Best practices in promoting national compliance with international instruments are gradually emerging. Engagement with parliamentarians, IPU and other parliamentary organizations has proved extremely valuable in

advancing universal adherence to disarmament conventions and national implementation of those conventions, including through the adoption of relevant national laws.

70. Given the important role played by parliaments in translating global agendas into concrete realities at the national level, the following recommendations are submitted for consideration:

(a) The United Nations system and IPU should continue developing structured interactions with national parliaments to help to bring a parliamentary perspective to the work of the United Nations and align national legislation with international commitments, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the New Urban Agenda;

(b) As the international community enters the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals, United Nations entities should continue supporting parliaments to deliver on that crucial agenda, building on the reconfigured United Nations country teams and ensuring coherence of action and cross-pillar coordination. In the process, United Nations entities should avail themselves more systematically of the unique expertise of IPU and its member parliaments, as called for by the General Assembly in resolution [72/278](#);

(c) The United Nations, IPU and other partner organizations should capture and consolidate their collective expertise, insights and lessons in a more systematic and comprehensive fashion, so as to highlight emerging best practices that are informed by data disaggregated by age, gender and other characteristics relevant to national contexts;

(d) As the international community continues to grapple with the profound socioeconomic, developmental and political implications of the COVID-19 outbreak, I urge national parliaments worldwide to enable robust responses to the global pandemic, putting the protection of human rights at the centre of all measures taken, and to enact legislation on increased preparedness, with the support of the United Nations system, IPU and other partner organizations;

(e) The United Nations, national parliaments and parliamentary organizations should take further steps to advance meaningful engagement with civil society groups, particularly those representing women and youth, in support of inclusive, gender-sensitive and human-rights-based legislation;

(f) On the occasion of the Organization's seventy-fifth anniversary, United Nations entities and IPU should capitalize on renewed opportunities to reassert common objectives and to bring people closer to global decision-making processes, including through their elected representatives.

71. As encouraged by the General Assembly, cooperation between the United Nations system, parliamentary organizations and national parliaments has continuously expanded over the years. The added value of those partnerships is increasingly acknowledged, and there are tangible benefits, as outlined throughout the present report. Nevertheless, the progress that has been made should not blind the international community to the fact that it must redouble its efforts to meet people's expectations with regard to eliminating poverty, inequality, environmental degradation and conflict. With that in mind, I urge the international community to broaden the space for engagement, including by national parliaments and associated forums, to help to bridge the socioeconomic, political and digital divides of our time.