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## Webinar for the Asia-Pacific Region Parliaments

### The impact of COVID-19 on SDG implementation in Asia-Pacific: What role for parliaments?

28 July 2020

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and  
the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

## CONCEPT NOTE

### Background

The current global health crisis is an unprecedented wake-up call that is showing us how crucial it is for countries to have policy and legislation ensuring preparedness and prevention. The socio-economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are uncovering stark asymmetries and structural imbalances in our societies, such as the prevalence of poverty, unequal access to health services, weak health-care systems, persistent inequalities, and weak regional and global cooperation.

In order to contain the spread of the pandemic, alleviate its effects and ensure that no major crisis will follow at the economic, social and environmental levels, it is crucial that countries implement well-directed and well-resourced responses that are inclusive, forward-looking, and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs are a unique framework that, thanks to their integrated and interlinked nature, provide a road map that can help countries improve their preparedness to respond to the pandemic and implement recovery plans that deliver social and environmental sustainability in a comprehensive manner. Parliaments have a central role to play in this effort. Their legislative, oversight and budget responsibilities make them key players in, for example, improving the health coverage of the people they represent, combating inequalities, and building peaceful, just and inclusive societies.

The COVID-19 pandemic is, moreover, likely to have a severe, negative impact on the realization of the SDGs. Not only does it risk hampering or reversing the gains achieved in a number of areas – such as in reducing extreme poverty and child and neonatal mortality, favouring sustainable consumption practices, or improving access to electricity and safe drinking water – but it may also exacerbate already high levels of inequality within and between countries. What we saw in the period before the pandemic was that, despite the progress made, action to deliver on the SDGs was not advancing at the speed required. Considering that most financial resources will likely be absorbed by the emergency response, the realization of the SDGs by 2030 may be in danger if national economic recovery plans are not aligned with the global goals.

As countries are now resetting their priorities and reallocating resources to deal with the pandemic, parliaments should be in a position to influence policies and budgets to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic responses and recovery strategies embrace and incorporate the SDG framework in its entirety. Parliaments should also monitor policy implementation and ensure that the needs and concerns of the whole of society are given due consideration, with no one left behind. The economic downturn due to the crisis has been increasing inequalities and is

disproportionally affecting women and the most vulnerable and marginalized segments of society. Now that the world is entering its final decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, parliaments must hold governments accountable for the goals they have subscribed to, and for the commitment they reaffirmed in 2019 to accelerate their efforts to reach their common vision by 2030.

### **Objectives of the webinar**

The webinar will provide parliaments with up-to-date information on the status of SDG implementation, as well as recommendations to accelerate transformative change in the region. Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff will have a unique space to exchange and discuss common challenges as well as strategies that they could implement to contribute to the realization of the SDGs by 2030 despite the current hurdles.

**Participation:** The webinar is open to parliaments of the following Asia-Pacific countries: Afghanistan, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Fiji, France, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Kazakhstan, Kiribati, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

**Languages:** The working languages will be English and Russian.