



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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## IPU Statement

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Interregional seminar on  
parliamentary capacity-building and  
the further implementation of the  
SDGs

Beijing, 10 September 2018

Honourable Chairpersons,  
Honourable Members of Parliament,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am particularly pleased and honoured to address you at the beginning of this important gathering, the Interregional seminar on parliamentary capacity-building and the further implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the outset, I wish to convey my warmest thanks to the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, H.E. Li Zhanshu, and to you my dear friend, H.E. Mr. Wang Chen, Vice Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, for your warm hospitality. I also wish to record my appreciation for your ongoing commitment to the partnership between the NPC and the IPU. You will allow me also to thank the dedicated staff of the NPC, who have worked tirelessly to put together this seminar.

On behalf of the IPU, I wish to welcome all participants to this seminar. I am glad to see many familiar faces in the room. I see Hon. Mensah-Williams, Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces of Namibia, a leading personality within the IPU.

The seminar opening today is part of the strong partnership that the NPC and the IPU have developed over the years. It represents a significant milestone in the process of enhancing parliamentary cooperation across regions with a view to advancing the implementation of the SDGs. Your presence here sends a strong message about your commitment, as well as the commitment of our hosts, who have organized on a yearly basis, in co-operation with the IPU, this meeting to strengthen parliamentary dialogue and cooperation for an effective implementation of the SDGs at the national, regional and global levels.

This is indeed the third time the NPC is hosting an interregional event for parliaments from Asia and Africa in order to discuss ways to implement the SDGs through South-South parliamentary cooperation. The outcome of previous meetings has been extremely positive as parliamentarians have had the precious opportunity to share successful experiences with counterparts from different countries and discuss specific actions for the achievement of the SDGs.

The NPC provides invaluable support to the IPU - both financial and political. This generous contribution allows us to further strengthen our efforts in mobilizing parliaments around the world for the effective implementation of the SDGs. I am very

much pleased to see that this partnership has been yielding many positive results in this critical time as the world is fully mobilized for the attainment of the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen,

By virtue of their constitutional powers, parliaments and parliamentarians can influence laws and policies to improve the well-being of their citizens and the planet. This includes addressing the major challenges that our societies currently face, such as nutrition, clean drinking water, sanitation, and sustainable clean energy, among others.

No change for the better will be felt until these issues are prioritized, adequately funded and carefully implemented. Parliaments hold the key to the solutions. They hold national governments accountable through their oversight function. As representatives of the people, parliamentarians have an important advocacy mission in their communities. They are the bridge between the people and the government. Last but not least, parliaments hold the power of the purse. If fully discharged, these critical functions can ensure that parliaments and parliamentarians use their powers in the most effective way and where there is greatest need.

The SDGs offer the opportunity for parliaments and parliamentarians to confirm their ongoing relevance by delivering on the well-being of the people. The transformational vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires all countries and stakeholders to work together to tackle poverty and improve living standards while protecting the environment by 2030. This ambition can only be fulfilled if proactive engagement is combined with strong political will.

However, many governments, especially in low and middle-income countries, lack the resources or the political will to guarantee adequate living standards for all. It is in this intersection between the basic needs for people - like nutrition, water, sanitation, sustainable clean energy - and governance, which the role of parliament comes into play, bringing enormous value.

Being a member of the Lead Group of the SUN Movement, a global initiative to improve nutritional standards worldwide, I am also deeply committed to eradicating malnutrition in all its forms. Malnutrition and diet are by far the biggest risk factors for the global burden of disease: every country is facing a serious public health challenge from malnutrition. Malnutrition manifests itself in many different ways: poor child growth and development; individuals who are skin-and-bone or prone to infection; those who are carrying too much weight or who are at risk of chronic diseases because of excess intake of sugar, salt, or fat; or those who are deficient in important vitamins or minerals.

The economic consequences of malnutrition represent losses of 11 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) every year in Africa and Asia, whereas preventing malnutrition delivers US\$16 in returns on investment for every \$1 spent. The global community has agreed on targets for nutrition, but despite some progress in recent years the world is off track for reaching those targets. In order to scale up efforts, the SDGs have enshrined the objective of “ending all forms of malnutrition,” challenging the world to think and act differently on malnutrition—to focus on all its facets and work to end it, for all people, by 2030.

The governments of several parliamentary delegations that are present here today (i.e. Ethiopia, Mozambique, Namibia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tanzania) are

committed members of this movement to scale up nutrition. The executive branch is responsible for implementing this task but this should not mean that the parliament is excluded from the process. On the contrary, parliaments also have a crucial role to play in this endeavour.

They can advocate at various levels to elevate nutrition and food security to the top of national agendas with a view to tackling inequalities, strengthening national food systems, improving access to basic services and making sure that special attention is paid to the marginalized and vulnerable populations. They can and should make sure through their oversight powers that national and international commitments are turned into action through coherent, comprehensive and coordinated policies, programmes and plans.

Like nutrition and food security, each one of the SDGs is dependent on many factors that can fall outside its own specific sector. This means that the SDGs provide a strong framework for parliaments to promote multi-sectoral coordination and ensure that the achievement of one single Goal can contribute to the realization of all the others.

The IPU is firmly committed to mobilizing parliaments to take action on the SDGs, and to providing parliamentarians with tools to effectively participate in key decision-making processes armed with the requisite information so that they may carry out their work more effectively.

We are very pleased to see that our members are proactively engaged in the SDGs' implementation process and that they are committed to doing their utmost to integrate the SDGs into their key parliamentary functions. The IPU is proud to facilitate exchanges of good practices and experiences among parliamentarians at all levels in order to inspire action and maximize the contribution of parliaments to the implementation of the goals.

Cooperation and exchanges among parliaments at the regional and interregional levels are instrumental in effective SDG implementation as they provide the opportunity to be informed of different practices for addressing the SDGs and identifying solutions. Through the IPU regional seminars parliaments have reaffirmed their vision of sustainable development based on human rights, equality, poverty eradication, peace and security, and have adopted forward-looking roadmaps to advance SDGs implementation.

At the national level, in order to assist parliaments in identifying their own priorities and make an informed decision about the most suitable and effective way to engage in SDGs implementation, the IPU has developed a series of tools and activities. The SDGs have been endorsed as a global framework but their implementation has to be tailored to national priorities. Parliaments in particular have important duties and expectations for them to deliver on the SDG are high. One of the discussions that we have been having at the IPU is how to make sure parliaments are fit for purpose to deliver on these expectations and on their own commitment. The fundamental question we have asked ourselves is whether parliaments have the capacity to do what people and the international community expect them to do. That is why in 2016 the IPU partnered with UNDP to develop an SDG Self-Assessment Toolkit for Parliaments.

This toolkit provides a golden opportunity for MPs and parliamentary staff to review key processes and identify institutional gaps, helping their parliaments establish the right mechanisms to take greater ownership of the SDGs through oversight, as well as

legislation, budgetary allocations and citizens' involvement. The self-assessment toolkit is not prescriptive but is designed to enable parliaments to identify baselines, good practices, gaps, opportunities and lessons learned to effectively institutionalize the SDGs and mainstream the various goals into parliamentary processes. It has been designed to be relevant to all parliaments, whatever political system they adhere to and whatever their stage of development.

The toolkit can help parliaments start their own process of internal benchmarking, set priorities for reform in order to strengthen their response to the SDGs and ensure harmonious coordination between the different structures of the parliament. For example, how to use the existing structures more effectively to address the SDGs and overcome silos. The ultimate objective is to ensure that parliaments are fit for purpose to play a full role in realizing the SDGs.

Assisting parliaments in using the SDG Self-Assessment Toolkit and fostering action at the national level is one of the IPU's priorities in 2018. This exercise has already resulted in important parliamentary decisions and initiatives.

By way of example, thanks to the self-assessment exercise, the Parliament of Fiji adopted an action plan that emphasized the importance of consistent engagement with government and civil society to ensure better access to data. The Fijian Parliament launched the idea of including the SDGs in induction courses for new MPs; making it mandatory to conduct systematic SDGs assessment of draft bills; and of organizing more consultations on the SDGs with citizens and communities in rural/remote areas.

In Serbia, parliamentary committees agreed to include SDG implementation in their oversight work and pledged to pay special attention to the work of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for the Implementation of Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. Members of parliament committed to supporting laws directly linked to the SDGs and to intensifying outreach to young people and marginalized groups so as to better understand their needs and incorporate them into their work on the SDGs.

In Mali, the exercise helped Parliament identify priorities for short- and medium-term operational SDGs strategies. Members of parliament defined actions and concrete goals in the areas of legislation, budget, oversight and representation. Recommendations included creating a parliamentary SDGs communications strategy, allocating a budget for their implementation, appointing a focal point for the SDGs and carrying out capacity-building for relevant staff.

As a direct result of this exercise, the Parliament of Georgia has drafted a model action plan to help institutionalize the Parliament's role in SDGs implementation, focusing on areas such as strengthening oversight mechanisms to monitor SDG progress. These developments will have an important impact on SDG implementation and on ensuring that no one is left behind.

Basically, there is no single path to advance the implementation of the SDGs. Each parliament should integrate the SDGs into its key parliamentary functions, according to its specificities, needs and priorities. That is why it is crucial to take the time to take stock of the situation in order to ensure that the work that has been conducted in your Parliament so far looks holistically and synergistically at human development needs. It is my hope that, as a result of this seminar, you will urge your parliaments to undertake the SDGs self-assessment exercise. The IPU, of course, stands ready to provide assistance in the facilitation of this exercise and would also be pleased to provide further information if requested.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is also my hope that this seminar will provide you with an opportunity to strengthen your knowledge about the SDGs, exchange views, share experiences and identify common strategies to integrate the SDGs in the work of your parliaments, and scale up the resources and political commitment to interregional cooperation.

The IPU is counting on this meeting to devise recommendations and conclusions that will provide the needed momentum for parliaments to continue to play a robust role in the implementation of the SDGs. I look forward to an open and constructive debate and wish you a very successful meeting.