



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Parliament of Sri Lanka

South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

***Promoting regional parliamentary cooperation for sustainable,
equitable and green economic growth***

Organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Parliament of Sri Lanka

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 11-12 July 2018

Colombo Declaration

We, Speakers of Parliament from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, gathered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 11 and 12 July 2018 for the third South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Summit deliberated the theme "Promoting regional parliamentary cooperation for sustainable, equitable and green economic growth". It was organized jointly by the Parliament of Sri Lanka and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The Summit built on the conclusions of our previous summits held in Bangladesh (2016) and India (2017) and on the sharing of experiences on topics that are crucial in attaining the SDGs in the region. We engaged in comprehensive discussions on the results achieved so far and welcomed the active engagement of all participants as they shared their lessons learned and good practices.

Our debates focused on four main themes: (1) parliamentary actions undertaken to advance SDGs implementation in the region; (2) the role of sustainable and green industrialization in the realization of the SDGs in South Asia; (3) the role of parliaments in promoting decent work and safe and secure working environments; and (4) parliaments as promoters of social and economic inclusion in South Asia.

We identified the following strategies, actions and recommendations to advance parliamentary engagement with the SDGs in our respective countries:

1. The SDGs are a comprehensive development framework that is intended to help focus and coordinate national policies towards a common vision for humanity. We commend the progress our countries have made and applaud the actions undertaken so far. We are pleased to note that countries in the region are increasingly translating the SDGs into a national strategy.
2. We strongly believe that Parliaments, as supreme democratic institutions, entrusted with the long-term vision for the country, have a critical role to play in realizing the SDGs. Each parliament has to find effective ways to hold government accountable for the goals they have subscribed to and to ensure that enabling laws are passed and budgets are adopted. Parliaments need to analyze their capacities to deliver on the SDGs as soon as possible.
3. Recognizing the importance of creating a balance between economic development and environmental sustainability, we stress the need to promote forward-looking green growth strategies that can sustain long-term growth and the well-being of current and future generations. Sustainable development must in fact be pursued in full regard to its social, economic and environmental dimensions. Its ultimate purpose is not only to eradicate extreme poverty, but also to promote holistic and harmonious progress of human development, and peace and stability in the region.
4. We acknowledge that climate change is mainly caused by human action often related to work activities, and reaffirm the urgent need to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by prioritizing

climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies that are in line with international agreements (for example, the Paris Agreement) and that take into consideration other societal goals, including poverty reduction and the protection of ecosystems.

5. A cordial trade and investment environment along with improved ease of doing business and an enabling environment for skill development may boost the region's transformation and competitive edge. In addition, identification and the transfer of appropriate technology choices across countries in the region, on a bilateral or multilateral basis, need to be encouraged. A regionally coordinated, sustainable and green industrialization strategy can help achieve many of the goals and targets set under the SDGs.

6. Decent work, social protection and rights at work represent integral elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Parliaments have key responsibilities in relation to labour, employment and social justice issues, and should therefore help to influence policies aimed at ensuring employment for all in decent working conditions, as well as adopt the requisite national legislation, vote the necessary budget and oversee the day-to-day action of the government.

7. Current generations are entrusted with implementing SDGs in order to ensure that the future of humanity can have access and benefit from the planet's resources. We should pledge to strengthen access to education, ensure that adequate funds are allocated to programmes for action intended to make education accessible to all children. Parliaments should protect children from any form of exploitation so that they can enjoy their childhood and grow into responsible and productive individuals.

8. Parliaments must ensure that every voice is taken into consideration. Promoting social and economic inclusion of marginalized and/or vulnerable groups and differently-abled people is crucial not only for personal human development but also for the progress and well-being of society as a whole. Parliaments need to devise effective strategies to ensure that everybody can enjoy social rights and have full and fair access to knowledge and technology, entrepreneurship and, more generally, economic opportunity.

9. In order to inspire action on the SDGs, we will bring the Colombo Declaration to the attention of our colleagues through all possible channels, and we also undertake to bring it to the attention of other relevant stakeholders. We pledge to continue our cooperation and strengthen our commitment and share our experiences at the fourth South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the SDGs

The IPU should promote parliamentary engagement with the SDGs and continue to work with the United Nations and other relevant partners towards the successful implementation of the SDGs.