



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Statement by the Permanent Observer Hon. Patricia Torsney

Intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda

United Nations
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Co-chairs,

I wish to highlight the key role of parliaments in the monitoring and follow-up process for the SDGs and echo some points raised by delegations and in the discussion paper of 12 May.

As many have said, this process will need to use existing structures, avoid duplication, be transparent and inclusive of all stakeholders. So let me say it as clearly as possible: at the national level, every Member State of the UN already has a vehicle for this process. It is the parliament.

Let's not reinvent the wheel: let's make use of the one we already have, even if some little repairs may be required.

While civil society and other stakeholders have a role to play, when it comes to monitoring and accountability for the SDGs at the national level there is no substitute for parliaments. Parliaments are elected by the people, are able to bring all views to the table and are properly equipped to scrutinize their governments. Parliaments are constitutionally and legally mandated to bring about change.

I use the term "accountability" rather than "follow up" quite deliberately. The fact that the SDGs are voluntary, in legal terms, does not make them dispensable. The SDGs are not a run-of-the mill UN agreement. They are our only hope to prevent the planet from imploding environmentally, economically and socially, and to realize the human rights of billions of people now and in the future. And we have just fifteen years to do it.

At the national level, it is the job of parliaments to represent the people, adopt laws and allocate budgets. At the IPU, we are urging our Members, all 166 of them, to demand their governments draw up or update a national sustainable development plan that reflects the new goals, adapted to each country's specificities.

As the convening space for all citizens to contribute their views, parliaments must be consulted in the design of the plan for the SDGs. After the plan is adopted, governments need to track progress and report back to parliament on a regular basis, possibly yearly. If truly inclusive of parliaments and all partners, this whole cycle - from design to reporting- can constitute the single most important way to build and maintain national ownership of the SDGs in every country.

As custodians of the public purse, parliaments play a key role in allocating the resources for the SDGs in the budget bill, again through consultative processes that reflect the goals and targets that each country will have determined for itself through the planning exercise. A national plan for the SDGs would carry weight only if it has sufficient provisions in the budget, as well as legislation that would provide for other means of implementation.

Now, to be totally blunt, the truth is that some parliaments are not fully equipped to deal with the SDGs. The question of being “fit for purposes” applies to parliaments as much as it does to national administrations and to the UN itself. We need to enhance parliamentary capacities to implement the goals. Parliaments must overcome their own silos if they are to integrate the social, environmental and economic pillar of sustainable development effectively, and if they are to mainstream the goals coherently. This is why, for example, we are asking all our Members to internally evaluate their own structures and consider establishing an SDG committee or caucus to help coordinate the work.

At the global level, very clearly the consensus in this room is that the HLPF will serve as the pinnacle of the UN-led review process. Let me take this opportunity to remind you that in its resolution 68/272 of May 2014, on *Interaction between the UN, national parliaments and the IPU*, the General Assembly very explicitly welcomed “the practice of including legislators as members of national delegations to major UN meetings and events, as appropriate, including new forums such as the UN High Level Political Forum on sustainable development...”

This provision acknowledges the benefit of ensuring that members of parliament are aware of the reports their governments will present to the HLPF, as well as of HLPF deliberations in general. Including parliamentarians in HLPF will help incorporate within parliaments lessons learned and best practices discussed within this new body.

The more information parliaments have on SDGs progress globally and domestically, the better job they will perform asking critical questions, consulting with citizens, and steering legislation in the right direction.

Distinguished delegates,

As you begin to draft the UN Summit Declaration in the coming weeks, I hope you will make some room for clear language, perhaps a paragraph, on the role of parliaments in the document along the lines I just described.

The IPU, for its part, will continue to engage parliaments in these issues as we have over the last two years and at the recent 132nd Assembly in Hanoi, whose final Declaration constitutes a veritable blueprint on the role of parliaments in implementation; and as we will do again this summer, on the occasion of the 4th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament here in New York.

Thank you.