



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland
www.ipu.org

IPU Statement

Paddy Torsney, Permanent Observer
to the United Nations, Head of the
New York Office, Inter Parliamentary
Union (IPU)

High-Level Meeting on the Protection
of the Global Climate

New York, 28 March 2019

Chairperson,

It is a great honor for me to address the President's High-Level Meeting on the issue of the Protection of the Global Climate on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), its 178 Member Parliaments, and the more than 6.5 billion of the world's 7 billion people living in countries whose parliaments are our Members.

About a month ago, at the IPU-UN Parliamentary Hearing, the United Nations Secretary General said: "I am deeply convinced that there is no other way to deal with global challenges than with global responses, organized in a multilateral way". He noted that this should include close cooperation with and among inter-governmental institutions, but also with the business community, civil society, academia, and parliaments.

Parliaments indeed have a vital role to play in fostering international cooperation to tackle cross-cutting and immediate threats, namely climate change. It is these and other issues which jeopardize the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We Parliamentarians – I am a former parliamentarian myself – should maximize our legislative, budgetary, and oversight functions. We need to build national ownership, transform international agendas into national laws, policies, and action plans, and hold our governments accountable. In order to do so, we should enhance cooperation and partnerships to share information and best practice experiences on a regional and global scale.

The time for parliaments to take stronger and more concerted action to respond to climate change is now.

Climate action is not new to the IPU. As some of you may know, the IPU has mobilized parliamentarians around climate change negotiations for more than a decade, organizing Parliamentary Meetings at the United Nations Climate Change Conferences. Yet, to be credible, effective and legally enforceable, international agreements must be transposed into national legislation, supported by appropriate budget allocation and robust oversight of government performance.

This puts parliaments at the heart of the response to climate change.

In 2016, our Members recognized the urgency of implementing the Paris Agreement and adopted the Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change. The plan provides practical recommendations to parliaments on how to achieve delivery on reducing global greenhouse emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change.

In spring 2018 the IPU and UN Environment signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This agreement enables the two organizations to work together more closely, ensuring that parliaments have the background knowledge and the necessary practical tools at hand to tackle climate change and environmental degradation effectively. In order to achieve this, the IPU and UN Environment are engaging in various joint activities that focus on: capacity building for parliamentarians; developing knowledge and honing skills; and facilitating dialogue and international exchange.

As part of this cooperation, the IPU and UN Environment are currently working with four African countries to provide technical assistance in the area of climate change through a series of pilot workshops, aimed at areas of parliamentary engagement that are most conducive to the national implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The first two workshops with the Parliaments of Zimbabwe and Burundi have taken place already – both of them attracting an audience of well over 100 MPs and staff members and resulting in progressive action plans to tackle the immediate threat of climate change.

In Zimbabwe, the workshop prompted parliamentarians to revisit and tighten measures for the collection of a carbon tax. During the workshop, the chairperson of the parliament's Committee on Transport and Infrastructural Development stressed the need to close gaps to ensure that the country received revenue from the carbon tax, particularly from foreign airlines and long distance trucks using the country's airspace and road infrastructure respectively.

In Burundi, one of the outcomes of the workshop was that parliamentarians realized the essential role they play with respect to sensitizing the public and to systematically advocate for the fight against climate change and the conservation of biodiversity.

So far, our work has shown that many MPs find the language of climate change too scientific, so direct engagement with them on the realities of their countries is important.

I think these technical assistance workshops are a wonderful first step in this direction, and I look forward to continuing the excellent cooperation between the IPU and the UN in general, and with UN Environment in particular.