

**Country:** Mexico

**IPU geopolitical group:** Group of Latin America and the Caribbean

### **Congress of the Union**

**Focus area:** promoting public participation in the process of amending existing laws to facilitate the implementation of national climate change commitments.

### **Key highlights (messages)**

- *Open parliament* initiatives and citizen-driven legislative actions can be promoted to address key SDG issues.
- Parliaments can initiate and maintain regular policy dialogue with citizens, allow them to provide specific feedback on various development concerns, and so seek to consolidate participatory lawmaking mechanisms to deliver the SDG commitments.

### **Context**

In 2016, the Senate established a dedicated working group to monitor the legislative implementation of the SDGs. In 2020, the group became a higher-level Special Commission, with additional responsibilities for: following up the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Mexico; and promoting legislative reforms or bills that enable or accelerate the implementation of the SDGs across the country. The Special Commission's duties include:

- issuing technical opinions, observations or non-binding recommendations on matters pertaining to the 2030 Agenda;
- sending recommendations or observations about SDG implementation and monitoring to the federal agencies of the public administration;
- organizing forums, workshops, discussion panels, symposiums and consultations with Mexican government agency leaders involved in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda; this work includes engaging scholars, civil society and private-sector representatives, and promoting other *open parliament* mechanisms that allow citizens to feed back on specific SDG initiatives.

The Special Commission is comprised of 18 Senators from all political parties and different states of Mexico. The Senators are also members of other ordinary commissions, which allows them to promote the SDGs in the work of those commissions, and raise senators' awareness of the key sustainable development principles of the 2030 Agenda.

The Special Commission has also prioritized SDG localization. It has implemented an engagement strategy for improved dialogue to maintain direct and collaborative relationships with local State Congresses, and to ensure that the different subnational territories advance towards achieving their own specific SDG

priorities. This two-way approach enables Special Commission members to reflect on local communities' most pressing needs, foster a fairer distribution of public resources, and ensure that all citizens are more included in proposed legislation. Seven State Congresses have designed a particular legislative follow-up mechanism for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in their states: Baja California, Chiapas, Mexico City, Guanajuato, Morelos, Quintana Roo and Veracruz.

State Congresses without a 2030 Agenda follow-up mechanism have a legislator to represent them on the Special Commission. The legislator's objective is to create a network of parliamentarians to promote the 2030 Agenda in their respective states, and facilitate the process of establishing SDG commissions or working groups in the local State Congresses. Currently, the Special Commission has appointed deputies from 23 State Congresses in Mexico.

Recently, the Chamber of Deputies established a broad-based SDG working group consisting of members from different parties and commissions. The group's mandate is to: foster a plurality of support and consensus about future priorities; accelerate implementation of the prioritized interventions; ensure that budget allocations deliver on the nationally defined outcomes of the SDG framework; enhance MPs' capacities and knowledge development on the principles of the 2030 Agenda; and promote parliament's inclusivity and openness by directly engaging the public in the work of the different commissions, sharing more information on the 2030 Agenda, and promoting better outreach to vulnerable and marginalized communities.

### **SDG integration into parliament's core functions**

The Congress actively promotes the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development (social, economic and environmental), while also considering specific SDGs and targets in the drafting, amending and enacting of laws. Verification of the SDGs and their targets is also considered in the legal assessments and ruling processes of the ordinary committees and special commissions.

Several organizations have jointly conducted an in-depth diagnosis of the integration of the SDGs into legislation, and examined both innovative practices during lawmaking and budget approval, as well as the application of a sustainable development approach in the work of various ordinary congressional committees. The organizations working together are: the Office of the President, *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network in Mexico (SDSN-Mexico) and its national members, and *Política y Legislación Ambiental AC*. This multistakeholder collaborative partnership resulted in the development of the 2020 Legislative Strategy for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Mexico. The report's results helped to understand what knowledge is available, and used the approaches and particular needs of the Congress to facilitate more effective SDG implementation. Various ordinary committees of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies participated in the analysis, with key findings widely disseminated throughout 2020 and 2021. In addition, a multistakeholder partnership supported the Chamber of Deputies to undertake a comprehensive legal assessment about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the achievement of the SDGs.

In concert with the 2030 Agenda Legislative Strategy, the Chamber of Deputies has developed a special budgeting methodology to assess how proposed sectoral allocations contribute to realizing the national strategy for the 2030 Agenda. The Chamber has also introduced gender budgeting. This practice mainstreams gender into the budget law by regularly completing gender impact analyses of the entire budget. In addition, a new working group on gender has been established to promote the institutionalization of gender principles across the work of the different committees.

#### **Innovative approaches to enable progress towards:**

##### **(i) Achieving universal health coverage for all, and improving access to quality healthcare (including to sexual and reproductive health services) for vulnerable and marginalized populations:**

One of the recommendations of the 2030 Agenda Legislative Strategy is to direct efforts towards improving legislation that relates to access to healthcare and good-quality services.

##### **(ii) Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change measures into national laws, policies and strategies:**

Constitutional reform was enacted to improve education on climate change, and mainstream sustainable environmental considerations into national educational policies and curriculums. The Senate approved and ratified the Escazú Agreement. This approval directly contributed to the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda by promoting comprehensive and inclusive environmental and justice policies that strengthen Mexico's environmental governance and justice system. The ratification of the Agreement supports the advancement of relevant targets in SDG13 and SDG16, ensuring public access to information and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

The Special Commission collaborated with SDSN-Mexico and its youth chapter, SDSN-Youth, on an *open parliament* activity. It was an opportunity for younger generations to make their suggestions and feed back on a range of specific concerns and issues relating to the 2030 Agenda. The youth representatives were also trained on the procedures for formulating and amending national laws. The initiative was then presented to the Senate's Plenum (plenary session). As a result, the youth participants' specific inputs were gathered as proposed amendments to the General Law on Climate Change. In addition, the young representatives' proposals under the initiative led to the identification of 13 innovative projects that would accelerate progress towards delivering climate change commitments and could be financed by the national Climate Change Fund.

One of the key priorities for the Chamber of Deputies is to guarantee a regular and open dialogue with citizens and stakeholders on key issues that affect the environment, and in particular to seek feedback on potential interventions that can have a multiplier effect across the climate change SDG targets.

#### **Supplementary activities**

A collaboration agreement was signed in 2020 between the Special Commission, the United Nations Development Programme country office in Mexico, and the Belisario Dominguez Institute to strengthen

institutional capacities and facilitate mutual learning on the SDGs among the Senate and local State Congresses. The agreement also introduced a specialized diploma, and jointly presented findings at a plenary session from the 2021 Regional Human Development Report, *Trapped: High Inequality and Low Growth in Latin America and the Caribbean*.

Both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies actively contributed to the 2016, 2018 and 2021 Voluntary National Reviews, and have continued to engage collaboratively with the government, non-state actors and the general public. Senators and deputies regularly integrate SDG principles into their initiatives and *puntos de acuerdo* (proposals<sup>1</sup>). This highlights the positive impact of the SDGs on a number of policy areas, and ensures that discussions about the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda more broadly become commonplace in the work of the Congress. The Chamber of Deputies regularly organizes with relevant stakeholders both peer learning sessions and the exchange of good practices on SDG implementation. Participants in these sessions are then able to identify key objectives and methods that address critical areas of the 2030 Agenda.

### Challenges and lessons learnt

The main challenges that significantly impede parliament from engaging more deeply are a lack of adequate understanding among MPs, and the low level of institutionalized common approaches towards implementing the SDGs. Therefore, both the Special Commission and the SDG working group invest significant time and resources in raising MPs' awareness, encouraging them to learn from their peers, and developing their capacity by working jointly with CSOs, academia and development partners, and collaborating with key national institutions.

### Sources and links

The 2020 Legislative Strategy for the 2030 Agenda:

[https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/573730/Estrategia\\_Legislativa\\_para\\_la\\_Agenda\\_2030\\_VF\\_comp.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/573730/Estrategia_Legislativa_para_la_Agenda_2030_VF_comp.pdf)

The Legislative Strategy for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that focuses on the 2030 Agenda:

[http://www.diputados.gob.mx/documentos/FOPREL\\_30.06.21.pdf](http://www.diputados.gob.mx/documentos/FOPREL_30.06.21.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> A *punto de acuerdo* proposal is approved or rejected in a plenary session with little or no debate. Proposals that are approved are referred to committee.