



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.



Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals and Gender Equality for the Parliaments of the Middle East and North Africa

Alexandria, Egypt, 18-20 September 2018

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the House of Representatives of Egypt and the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union

Under the high patronage of the Egyptian Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, Dr. Sahar Nasr

General Information note

1. Background information

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They will inform development agendas and policies over the next 15 years. The 17 Goals and their 169 targets are available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>.

If successfully implemented, the SDGs will transform the world and peoples' lives. IPU Member Parliaments have committed to doing what is necessary to carry forward the vision of transformation embodied in the SDGs. Under the auspices of the IPU, parliaments have pledged to translate the SDGs into enforceable domestic law, hold governments accountable and align budgets with national sustainable development plans. To achieve these commitments, parliaments have concluded that they must strengthen their decision-making processes.

The IPU and its Member Parliaments were actively involved in negotiating the SDGs. They campaigned for democratic governance to be a stand-alone goal by arguing that it enables development in all societies. As a result of those efforts, Goal 16 was adopted. It highlights that governance, inclusion, participation, rights, and security are important parts of achieving sustainable development. The ultimate aim of Goal 16 is to meet the expectations and needs of citizens in an effective and democratic manner.

The Arab region has been affected by a number of political changes since December 2010, which have shaped a new political and economic reality for the countries that make up the region. The recent uprisings and conflicts have had a clear impact on the regional landscape, which experienced a drop in economic growth – from 5.9 per cent during 2005–2010 to 3.5 per cent during 2011–2014 – and the spread of unemployment, especially among women and young people. The decline is clearly more precipitous in conflicts zones, where a large proportion of the population is currently living under the poverty line.

In order to tackle these challenges and ensure peaceful and just societies as stated in the 2030 Agenda, there is an urgent need to strengthen efforts and develop economic policies that are fair, inclusive and long lasting. The SDGs can only be achieved if greater emphasis is placed on promoting sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all - most notably women of all socioeconomic backgrounds who represent a high percentage of the entire population.

The adoption of the SDGs has reinforced global commitments, specifically through Goal 5, to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”. This commitment to gender equality constitutes the foundation for the achievement of all SDGs since it calls for political, social and economic priorities to take into account the participation of both men and women.

With sincere thanks to Bibliotheca Alexandrina for generously hosting the Regional Seminar

While some positive measures have already been taken, further progress is still needed, in particular to ensure gender equality in the areas of education, training and employment as well as in economic and political leadership. With respect to women's political participation, there has been an increase in the number of policies promoting equality in several Arab countries over recent years. A number of Arab countries have adopted temporary measures to increase women's participation in politics. Nevertheless, additional, more permanent policies are required to support women's economic and political empowerment in the long term that take into account their daily lives, rights and needs, including rural women and women living in countries and regions in crisis situations. These women play a pivotal role in development, but their contribution continues to be hampered by the multiple forms of discrimination and violence that they face and their lack of access to proper social services, economic opportunities and health care.

Hence, it is clear that Goal 5 as well as the SDGs as a whole will not be achieved without addressing the main obstacles including legal, social and cultural barriers to women's autonomy. This includes repealing discriminatory laws and ending violence and harmful practices against women and girls, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. In these areas too, countries of the region are at a crossroads. Their commitment has been growing and they are increasingly adopting laws that prevent and combat discrimination and violence against women and girls.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes of the Regional Seminar

The Seminar will aim to define the opportunities available to and challenges facing parliaments in their implementation of the SDGs and gender equality. It will help participants to share experiences, good practices and challenges, and examine the steps that they can take to support SDG implementation at the national and regional levels.

A discussion of Goal 16 will centre on how parliaments should implement the SDGs so as to capture synergies and build coherence when national policies are being developed. To be able to do this, each parliament will need to evaluate its own institutional processes. Special emphasis will therefore be placed on developing more effective, accountable and transparent institutions as well as inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making processes that can effectively accelerate the translation of the global commitments of the SDGs into meaningful change on the ground.

Furthermore, the Seminar will offer a platform for participants to discuss concrete solutions from the region to achieving the SDGs, and most notably, gender equality and women's empowerment. By sharing knowledge and understanding of the best practices in the region, participants will aim in their respective parliaments to strengthen the consideration of women's effective participation in leadership position at all levels and in all sectors, and to combat discriminatory laws and practices and other social and cultural barriers to women and girl's empowerment.

The Seminar therefore aims to spur on greater national commitment as well as strong regional cooperation to develop strategies that effectively integrate all SDGs into national legislation.

3. Venue and dates:

Suggested day of arrival in Egypt via Cairo International Airport: 17 September
Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt, from 18 to 20 September 2018
Suggested day of departure via Cairo International Airport: 21 September

4. Participation:

The Seminar is intended for the following parliaments of the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

The parliaments of the countries listed above are invited to send delegations of up to four men and women members of parliament, with additional parliamentary staff if needed. Delegates should be directly involved in the topics of the seminar and should represent both different political affiliations and both genders in a balanced manner.

5. Registration:

Participants are requested to complete and return the enclosed Registration Form to the following address:

Inter-Parliamentary Union
 5, chemin du Pommier
 case postale 330
 1218 Grand-Saconnex
 Geneva, Switzerland
 Email: postbox@ipu.org and mgn@ipu.org
 Tel: +41 22 919 41 50/45
 Fax: +41 22 919 41 60

6. Panellists:

The IPU, in consultation with the organizing partners, will select panellists, including national, regional and international experts. These panellists will make presentations and lead interactive discussions on each of the themes of the Seminar.

7. Documents

Participants will receive copies of the panellists' presentations as they become available. To the extent possible, the conference Secretariat will make background documentation on the topics under discussion available for the information of participants. The Secretariat will strive to provide these documents in English, French and Arabic.

8. Language:

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided into and from English, French and Arabic.

9. Accommodation

The House of Representatives will make a block booking reservation for four nights in Alexandria (17 to 20 September) at hotels indicated below in the table. The hotels suggested below in the table are offering special rates for participants to the Regional Seminar in Alexandria. These special rates are mentioned within the Hotel Reservation Form and are inclusive of all taxes and breakfast. Participants are kindly asked to complete and send the Hotel Registration Form.

Tolip Hotel Alexandria	Four Seasons Hotel Alexandria	Steigenberger Cecil Hotel Alexandria
252 El-Gaish Rd, Mustafa Kamel WA Bolkli Qism Sidi Gabir, Alexandria Governorate	El-Gaish Rd, San Stifano, Qism El-Raml, Alexandria Governorate	16 Saad Zaghloul Square, Al Mesallah Gharb WA Sharif Basha, Qesm Al Attarin, Alexandria Governorate
Tel: +20 3 541 93 30 Email: info@tolipalexandria.com Mr. Mohamed Omar, Sales Manager	Tel: +20 3 581 80 00 Email: reservations.alx@fourseasons.com Ms. Sara Osman, Sales Manager	Tel: +20 3 487 71 73 Email: amany.hassan@steigenberger.com Mr. Amany Hassan, Reservations Department

Requests for hotel reservations will be processed on a first-come-first-served basis.

Parliamentarians and accompanying legal officials are kindly asked to settle their bills directly with the hotels concerned.

10. Visas

A valid passport is required to enter Egypt as well as a visa, except for travellers from visa-exempt countries. To obtain a visa or further information on customs regulations, participants are advised to contact the embassy of Egypt in their respective countries.

11. Arrival and departure

In order to ensure an efficient reception service, all participants are requested to provide their arrival and departure information, including dates, flight numbers and arrival and departure times, on the hotel reservation form. Participants are strongly encouraged to arrive at the Cairo international airport on Monday, 17 September before 4 p.m. A special tour will be organized for the participants arriving before 4 p.m.

The competent services of the Parliament of Egypt will welcome delegates upon their arrival at the Cairo International Airport and arrange their transfers to and from the airport. They will also provide transfers for delegates between their hotels and the official seminar venue and related events.

12. Registration and Information Desk

A Registration and Information Desk will be open for participants at the seminar venue from 17 to 20 September. The opening hours are from 8 a.m. until the end of the day's proceedings.

Participants are requested to register at the Desk promptly after arrival. The Desk will issue identity badges, deal with enquiries concerning the seminar and handle messages and mail.

For the issuance of identity badges, delegates are requested to send the Inter-Parliamentary Union, via e-mail along with the Registration Form, a passport-size photograph against a white background, along with their travel details. They may also, should they so wish, provide a personal profile or biographical data.

13. Security

The national authorities will take all the necessary measures in regard to security. Participants are required to wear their identity badges at all times while present at the seminar venue.

Participants are kindly required to show a valid ID (passport or identity card) when entering the House of Representatives. For security reasons, participants should be prepared for identity checks

14. Catering and lunches

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina catering service will serve daily local specialities at coffee breaks and lunch. The Egyptian Minister of Investment and International Cooperation, Dr. Sahar Nasr, will invite all participants to the Regional Seminar to two traditional and cultural Egyptian lunches on Wednesday 19 and Thursday 20 September. More details will be sent in due time. On Tuesday 18 September a buffet lunch with a selection of local specialities will be offered at the Bibliotheca Alexandria.

15. Receptions

The Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation will host dinner receptions on Tuesday 18 September and Wednesday 19 September. The venue and programme of these evenings will be sent in due time.

16. Guided tour of the Bibliotheca Alexandria

The participants to the Regional Seminar are invited to visit the Bibliotheca Alexandria, a cultural and historical monument. A guided tour of the Library is scheduled on Wednesday 19 September at 4.30 p.m. and will last approximately one hour and a half. Participants who would like to register for the guided tour need to send an email before Tuesday 18 September, with the subject "Special Tour Bibliotheca", to Ms. Marie-Graziella Nguini at mgn@ipu.org. The guided tour of the Bibliotheca will be in English, French and Arabic.

17. Guided tour of the Egyptian House of Representatives and cultural visit of Cairo

The participants to the Regional Seminar are invited by the Egyptian House of Representatives to visit its Parliament and to discover the Cairo's historical monuments. The guided tour of the city is scheduled for the last day of the Seminar, Thursday 20 September. Departure will be after lunch, at 1.45 p.m. from the Bibliotheca Alexandria. Participants who would like to register for this guided tour need to send an email before Tuesday 18 September, with the subject "Special Tour Cairo", to Ms. Marie-Graziella Nguini at mgn@ipu.org.

- **Transportation:** Transportation will be arranged for every participant desiring to attend this guided tour. There will be no transportation back to Alexandria on Thursday 20 September.
- **Accommodation in Cairo:** Participants who join the tour will have to stay overnight in Cairo and book a hotel for the night of 20th September. The House of Representatives arranged preferential rates in two hotels in Cairo for the participants. The House of Representatives made a block booking reservation for one night in Cairo (20 September) at the hotels indicated below in the table. These special rates for participants to the Regional Seminar in Alexandria are inclusive of all taxes and breakfast. Participants who require accommodation are kindly requested to contact the hotels directly at the emails indicated below.

Dusit Thani Lakeview Cairo			Hilton Cairo Heliopolis		
Room Type	SGL	DBL	Room type	Single	Double
Deluxe Room	\$145.00	\$165.00	Guest room	\$130	\$145
Club Room	\$205.00	\$225.00	Guest pool view room	\$150	\$165
Dusit Suite	\$265.00	\$285.00	Pool view Suite	\$270	\$285
Executive Suite	\$445.00	\$465.00	Deluxe room	\$185	\$200
			Premier room	\$240	\$255

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18. Weather conditions

For information on weather in Cairo and Alexandria please see:

<https://www.accuweather.com/en/eg/cairo/127164/weather-forecast/127164>

<https://www.accuweather.com/en/eg/alexandria/126995/weather-forecast/126995>

19. Currency regulations

The local currency is the Egyptian pound. The exchange rate is about 1EGP = 0.05632 USD.

20. Medical facilities

During the seminar, first aid facilities will be available at the venue. All other medical services and prescriptions will be at the participants' own expense.