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Chemin du Pommier 5  
Case postale 330  
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex  
Geneva – Switzerland  
[www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)

## IPU Statement

Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron  
IPU President

Parliamentary Meeting on the  
occasion of the UN  
Climate Change Conference  
(COP24)

Krakow, 9 December 2018

Hon. Beata Mazurek, Deputy Speaker of the Polish Parliament,  
Ms. Patricia Espinosa, UNFCCC Executive Secretary,  
Fellow parliamentarians,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to warmly welcome you and thank you for joining this Parliamentary Meeting jointly organized by the IPU and the Polish Parliament. Allow me from the outset to express my thanks and appreciation to our Polish hosts for the great collaboration and for receiving us with such warm hospitality.

As stated in the preamble of the Paris Agreement, climate change is a common concern for all humankind. It is the direct result of human activities that are profoundly affecting the ecosystem as well as the fundamental human rights of people. Climate change represents one of the biggest threats to sustainable development.

Human influence on the climate system is clear and evident. Experts continue to examine how the climate will react to rising atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases over time and in the various regions of the world. What will happen if we continue producing increasing amounts of greenhouse gases? What will be the consequences for humans and for our planet?

As of today, we estimate that human activities have already caused approximately 1.0°C of global warming (above pre-industrial levels). Global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from energy and industry have increased in 2017 after three years of stabilization, as noted in the latest UNEP Emissions Gap Report.

The findings of the 2018 report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change are alarming. The report notes that an increase in global warming to 2°C rather than 1.5°C will have further and more severe negative consequences on the world we live in today:

Global warming rising above 1.5°C to 2°C would not only further increase weather extremes, increase climate-related risks for ecosystems, and lead to the long-lasting or irreversible loss of biodiversity. With an increase in global warming above 1.5°C we will also face further increases in risks to health, livelihoods, water supply, food and human security, as well as an increase in risks to economic growth. Furthermore, levels of 2°C global warming will negatively impact sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequalities.

These vast consequences illustrate the urgency to act now. We are far from having tackled the mentioned risks yet. The current nationally stated mitigation ambitions until

2030 would not limit global warming to 1.5°C. Rather, the IPCC projects these to result in a global warming of about 3°C by 2100 with warming expected to continue afterwards.

The good news is that some of the kinds of actions that would be needed to limit global warming to 1.5°C are already underway, and that limiting warming to 1.5°C is technically still possible, however, only if NDC ambitions are increased before 2030. Global greenhouse gas emissions need to be approx. 55% lower than the levels of 2017 to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

The less encouraging news is that the limitation of global warming to 1.5°C “would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society” in order to significantly reduce emissions in all sectors. The UNEP Emissions Gap Report 2018 emphasizes that the current commitments through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) are insufficient to bridge the emissions gap. Key actions with respect to this call for societal changes are thus to enable the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, as well as the rapid scaling up of NDC ambitions.

The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016. The question today is: What has happened since? Research has shown that over the last 12 months countries were ramping up their climate efforts, from setting bolder emission-reduction targets and protecting forests to phasing out coal-fired power plants. These are key foundation stones as countries, along with businesses, cities and states, prepare to enhance their ambition by 2020 to keep the world on track to meet the Paris Agreement goals of limiting global warming.

Now, however, the time has come for bolder action. The aforementioned announcements are pointing in the right direction, yet, it is important to note that they are just intentions to act. They still need to be backed up with action, translating high-level goals into the domestic legislation and regulations that will put them into practice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Urgent action is needed now. But what can parliaments and parliamentarians do?

- It is crucial for parliaments to take on their core legislative, oversight, budgetary and representation functions to help ensure the implementation of the climate change commitments contained in the Paris Agreement.
- Parliaments should also use their influential societal roles as change agents advocating for behavior change and the limitation of global warming to 1.5°C to give people and ecosystems more room to adapt and remain below relevant risk thresholds. This puts parliaments at the heart of the response to climate change.
- Parliaments are not only well placed to scrutinize how governments are responding to national and international climate change issues, but can also hold their executives to account over their actions, or lack thereof. Furthermore, parliamentarians bridge the gap between constituents, governments and decisions made at the global level.

However, a great deal of work is still needed to ensure that parliaments establish a legislative response to climate change that is consistent with their nationally determined contributions. Well-informed climate legislation can bring significant

national and local co-benefits, including strengthened energy security, improved health, reduced disaster risk, increased access to sustainable energy, investment in clean and domestic energy sources, the creation of high-quality jobs and better air quality. Such legislation and its implementation are therefore a critical precondition for the broader transition to sustainable development.

A number of parliaments have declared climate change action as a priority for their engagement in strengthening and promoting environmental sustainability. At the IPU Assembly in October 2018, our Member Parliaments adopted an emergency resolution entitled “Climate change – Let us not cross the line”. Therein, parliaments note with major concern the findings of the IPCC Report, and call amongst others, on all parliaments to “strengthen oversight of national and international commitments, including government implementation of national legislation” and “encourage their governments to achieve their NDCs and 100% renewable energy targets”. In this emergency resolution, parliaments further agreed to recognize and decisively act on the IPCC Special Report.

Let me thus give you some examples of concrete actions parliaments and parliamentarians could support with the aim to reduce emissions and to limit global warming, in line with the IPCC Special Report (and UNEP’s Emissions Gap Report).

- Parliament should aim to increase the effectiveness of **domestic policy** to achieve the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement. NDC ambitions need to be increased before 2030 and national mitigation ambitions enhanced. Domestic policies will be crucial to translate these mitigation ambitions into action.
- We, the parliamentarians, can advocate for the increase of **investments** in infrastructure as well as in adaptation and mitigation, in order to limit climate-related risks. Policies can be adopted to lower the risk of low-emissions and adaptation investments in order to help mobilizing further private funds, as well as helping to mobilize resources through shifting of global investments.
- Parliaments may consider the adoption of **fiscal policies** which set incentives for low-carbon investments and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- All of us should aim to accelerate technological **innovation** in order to contribute to the development, commercialization and adoption of mitigation and adaptation technologies. Public support of research and development can help to increase the efficiency of innovation policies. Here again, the promotion of investment in new technologies is key to enhance innovation which ultimately will help to bridge the emissions gap.
- **International cooperation** will benefit the dissemination and further advancement of technological innovations in this field, and strengthen capacities for climate action nationally.

There is certainly much that can be done to support parliamentarians in their crucial role in combating climate change in all countries in the world, including the need to further raise awareness of the issue among MPs, and to further strengthen their core legislative, oversight, budgetary and representation functions. This is the mission that the IPU is undertaking together with its United Nations and other partners.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our meeting today will discuss a number of important issues facing parliaments as they deal with climate change today. It is my hope that our debates will be frank, focused and productive – true to best parliamentary traditions.

At the end of our deliberations, I hope that we will be able to adopt the outcome document drafted by the Rapporteur, Ms. Anna Paluch, Member of the Polish Parliament. The proposed text sends a clear political message to government negotiators and is also a rallying call to action for our global parliamentary community. Importantly, it will give us all something to build upon as we go home to our parliaments and continue our work to implement the Paris Agreement.

I look forward to the sessions ahead and I wish you a very successful meeting.