



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Statement

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United Nations 2030 Agenda for
Sustainable Development”

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Honorable Speaker of Parliament,
Honorable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As we have heard this morning, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is an inspirational document as well as a ground-breaking global commitment to end, not reduce, poverty and set the world on a sustainable path to inclusive development. Endorsed by government leaders at a United Nations Summit in September 2015, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 actionable targets have been built on past efforts to implement the poverty reduction agenda. The SDGs aspire to realize the human rights of all, to achieve gender equality and to advance the realization of a sustainable development merging three key policy areas: economic, social and environmental.

Mobilizing Parliaments around the sustainable development agenda is one of the IPU's priorities. It represents a specific objective in our strategy 2017-2021. In fact it informs and runs through our entire Strategy. The implementation of the SDGs is in fact extremely linked to the promotion of democracy which is Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)'s core mission. Democracy supports social justice and ensures the fair distribution of resources; and sustainable development ensures that the necessary resources are available to current and future generations. Democracy should in fact be seen not only as an end but also as a mean to achieve SDGs as I said during the opening ceremony.

Given how pivotal the SDGs were going to be, from the very beginning the IPU began to organize a parliamentary input to the United Nations so that the goals would include the views of parliamentarians. The perspectives of parliaments and parliamentarians from across the globe have indeed enriched the formulation and articulation of the SDGs and the IPU is proud to have contributed to this process. As recalled earlier, in 2015, on the occasion of the 132nd IPU Assembly held here in Viet Nam, Members of the IPU reaffirmed their vision of sustainable development and adopted the Hanoi Declaration entitled: “The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning Words into Action”. Through this declaration, parliaments committed to doing their utmost to strengthen national ownership of the goals; translate the goals into enforceable domestic laws and regulations; and hold governments accountable for the goals they subscribed to.

Parliaments and parliamentarians have a crucial role to play to ensure the effective realization of the SDGs. Through their key parliamentary functions, they have the responsibility to represent all their citizens - especially the most marginalized and vulnerable - listen to their specific needs and ensure that the actions undertaken by

their government effectively contribute to the development and well-being of the entire society. We only have 12 years to overcome the global challenges and achieve an inclusive and comprehensive development from an economic, social and environmental perspective. This should not just be a routine procedure. If there will not be any substantial change of the ways we act and contribute to development, we will keep on facing the same tragic situations that impede the ability of our whole society to develop and guarantee the well-being for future generations.

In order to better understand and document the work conducted so far by parliaments to advance the realization of the SDGs, the IPU has launched a global survey this summer. It has been distributed to all Member (and non-Member) parliaments and its data and findings will be published online and shared with parliaments and relevant stakeholders. So far 84 countries have participated in this survey. This amounts to a participation rate of 44% of IPU Members in this survey.

The distributed questionnaire consists of two parts. The first part collects information on what kind of activities related to the SDGs parliaments have carried out (e.g. training sessions, inquiries, plenary debates). With the second part of the questionnaire, we aimed to find out what kind of mechanisms parliaments have established to organize their work around the SDGs. We also aimed to collect information on how the SDG work is coordinated, how the SDGs are mainstreamed, and to what extent parliaments participate in national coordination mechanisms and global SDG structures like the UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable and Development.

I am pleased to report to you some preliminary findings of this survey. According to the collected data, more than half of the responding parliaments (58%) have held training sessions and/or awareness-raising activities on the SDGs for either parliamentarians or parliamentary staff, or for both staff and parliamentarians. These preliminary results show that just over 50% (51%) of responding parliaments indicated that plenary debates have been held on the SDGs. 48% have not had any plenary debates on the SDGs at all.

With respect to the SDGs progress reporting, it seems that 51% of responding parliaments have received reports by the government about the implementation of the SDGs. Out of all respondents, 14 indicated that the national statistical office has submitted such reports, while only a small fraction of respondents received these through the supreme audit institution, national human rights council or through the ombudsman.

Furthermore, 53% of parliaments have taken action to ensure that the SDGs are reflected in the national budget. While in a rather large percentage of parliaments (i.e. 63%) parliamentary committees have held inquiries into the SDGs, in only 22% committees have published reports on the SDGs.

If we look at the second part of our survey which documents parliamentary mechanisms put in place dealing with the SDGs, the results support the view that parliaments organize their work on the SDGs in different ways. While 52% of our respondents adopted mechanism specifically dedicated to the SDGs, others treat the SDGs in already existing parliamentary bodies. The same percentage of parliaments have - or have not - mainstreamed the SDGs into the work of all relevant parliamentary committees.

We further inquired if there is a national SDG coordination mechanism, and if yes, if parliament participates in this national SDG coordination mechanism: in 81% of the participating countries, a national SDG coordination mechanism – led by the government - exists but in less than a half, parliament is involved in this national SDG coordination mechanism.

This data has been complementing the analysis and considerations we are having with respect to parliaments' engagement towards the SDGs. We have realized that nowadays parliaments are much more aware of the SDGs than they were of their predecessor—the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). We have observed a lot of interest and goodwill towards the SDGs, and parliamentarians who are familiar with the SDGs tend to quickly understand their political interest. Nevertheless there is still a lot of hesitation and uncertainty about the specific actions parliaments should adopt in order to effectively contribute to the realization of the SDGs.

Even though the executive branch is responsible for implementing the SDGs, we should never forget that the parliament should not be excluded from the process, and on the contrary, it should be engaged in all aspects of planning for implementation. Vietnam's National Assembly obviously is fully involved from what we have heard today.

At the governmental level, many countries have revised their national development plans or are producing specific SDG plans. Yet parliaments seem to be only weakly associated with these processes. Parliaments should be at the forefront in representing their citizens and in ensuring the governments SDGs action plan concretely respond to people's needs. An important entry point for parliaments to exercise oversight of the national plan may come from the international arena, most notably the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, a platform to which Governments are invited to present a progress report at regular intervals. As we have heard, the Government of Viet Nam submitted its national voluntary report this year. I would like to encourage the National Assembly of Viet Nam to continue to closely follow up on this in order to monitor the SDGs progress and ensure the Parliament's involvement to the review of the next report before it will be submitted. I have participated on the HLPF and have seen that Voluntary National Reports have often been presented jointly by the Executive and the Legislative bodies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Expectations from parliaments to deliver on the SDG are high. One of the discussions that we have been having in the IPU is how to make sure parliaments are fit for purpose to deliver on these expectations and on their own commitment. The fundamental question we asked ourselves was whether parliaments have the capacity to do what people and the international community expect them to do.

At the national level parliaments need to identify their own priorities and make an informed decision about the most suitable and effective way to engage in SDG implementation. The IPU/UNDP self-assessment Toolkit we launched this morning is intended to assist parliaments in that direction. Different versions of the draft were shared with parliamentarians worldwide and the toolkit benefited from their input.

I am very much pleased to see that the National Assembly of Viet Nam is committed to activating its role in promoting the 2030 Agenda also by translating the IPU/UNDP toolkit on SDGs into Vietnamese so as to enhance national ownership and raise further awareness on the role of the parliament with respect to the SDGs

implementation. I very much hope that the National Assembly will soon use the toolkit to further strengthen its work around the SDGs.

Assisting parliaments in using the SDG Self-Assessment Toolkit and fostering action at the national level is one of IPU's priorities in 2019. Up to now the parliaments of Fiji, Serbia, Mali, Georgia, Sri Lanka and Chad took part in a SDG self-assessment that already resulted in important parliamentary decisions and initiatives. A number of other parliaments from both developing and developed countries are making plans to use the toolkit.

You will hear more about the SDGs self-assessment process in the following session. In conclusion, allow me to reiterate that the IPU would be very much pleased to assist the National Assembly of Viet Nam in performing this exercise that represents a precious opportunity for the Parliament to identify its baseline and establish a framework for parliamentary SDGs action plan. Examining good practices, lessons learned and challenges through this action-oriented process will not only help parliamentarians tailor their key functions so that they are in conformity with the SDGs but also assume full ownership of the exercise's findings

I strongly believe parliament's role can be a powerful catalyst for the realization of the SDGs, and the IPU remains committed to assisting its Members in this process.

Thank you.