



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

MOBILIZING PARLIAMENTS FOR THE SDGs

An official side event of the 2016 High Level Political Forum

Monday, 18 July, 1:15 pm - 2:30 pm
Conference Room 3

Summary of the discussion

This meeting was the first-ever parliamentary side event of the UN High Level Political.¹ It was open to all participants in the HLPF session. Thirty MPs from sixteen national delegations were in attendance.

Mr. **Martin Chungong**, IPU Secretary General, moderated a panel with Dr. **Jiko Fatafehi Luveni**, Speaker of the parliament of Fiji, Mr. **Futho Hoolho**, Vice President of the Senate of Lesotho, Ms **Karina Gould**, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development and member of the House of Commons of Canada, and Mr. **Mitchell Toomey**, Director of the SDGs Action Campaign of the United Nations.

Mr. Chungong opened the meeting with a statement emphasizing how the SDGs need to be at the center of policy making not only because of the long-term challenges the world is facing but also as a way of addressing the underlying causes of current emergencies, from terrorism to natural disasters, unemployment and the social unrest linked to growing inequalities. After noting the importance of the governance goals (Goal 16) as an enabler of the entire framework, Mr. Chungong proceeded to outline IPU's plan to support the SDGs, which will be placed high among IPU's strategic objectives.

Specific steps IPU is undertaking include: a campaign for the adoption of parliamentary motions on the SDGs; workshops to raise awareness of the SDGs and provide parliaments with practical advice; a toolkit to help parliaments assess their own institutional capacities to mainstream the SDGs; and engagement of parliaments in the voluntary national reviews that governments will present to the HLPF. Mr. Chungong announced also that the IPU Standing Committee on UN Affairs will provide an institutional link to the HLPF with a special session on the SDGs in each of its spring meetings.

The panel presentations and the ensuing floor debate provided a good overview of how parliaments can play their legislative, accountability and representative role to help implement the SDGs:

¹ Further to this event, on 25 July, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/298 on the Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU. Para 12 of this resolution "Welcomes the contribution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the work of the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, through the participation of parliamentarians, in convening a regular parliamentary side event on the work of parliaments to institutionalize the SDGs."

- A number of parliaments are in the process of assessing their own capacities to institutionalize the SDGs according to their first precept of “leaving no one behind” and in a way that upholds the independence of the legislative branch vis-a-vis the executive. Various examples of parliamentary support available through IPU and UNDP were presented. Further, an institutional memory of the SDGs is needed in view of the high turnover of MPs that can be expected over the years.
- At least two parliaments, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mali, have adopted a parliamentary motion on the SDGs. Both reported that the exercise of introducing and debating these motions helped greatly in raising awareness of the SDGs among MPs. An IPU survey prior to the HLPF session showed that three parliaments (out of 22) were actively engaged in their countries’ voluntary national reviews. While promising, these results suggest a long road ahead to get parliaments fully engaged in this process.
- Establishing some kind of SDGs focal point in the parliament will help maintain the momentum toward implementation while providing for greater policy coordination. Some parliaments have established full-fledged SDG committees, taskforces or caucuses; others have simply assigned the task of policy coordination to existing structures (e.g., Committee Chairs forums). Cross-party membership in these structures is key to their success.
- The global SDGs need to be localized country-by-country through inclusive, participatory approaches. This includes a national plan for the SDGs derived from open and transparent consultations in parliament. While the doors of parliament must be open to public scrutiny, MPs should endeavour to reach out to people directly in their constituencies in as many practical ways as possible. MPs can play a key role in promoting the SDGs in terms that people can understand.
- More data disaggregation to identify the most vulnerable groups and their specific needs will be needed to target policies more effectively and to track progress overtime.
- The promotion, protection and realization of human rights should be the ultimate test of SDGs implementation. Many parliaments need to be more inclusive of women and other under-represented groups for this human rights approach to take hold. This may require new electoral laws to provide for greater diversity of candidates and political perspectives.
- Ultimately, the SDGs capture issues that are already on the minds of MPs and citizens at large. The novelty of the SDGs is that they connect those issues synergistically and in a coherent framework. This framework will help parliaments do away with piece meal policy-making.