



QUITO COMMUNIQUE

***Adopted by the 128th IPU Assembly
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On the occasion of the 128th IPU Assembly in Quito, Ecuador, members of parliament came together for a discussion on the theme *From unrelenting growth to purposeful development "Buen vivir": New approaches, new solutions*. The theme was chosen as a contribution to the global reflection on the post-2015 development agenda and the future Sustainable Development Goals that will apply to both developed and developing countries. The following is a synthesis of the discussion held during the plenary debate of the Assembly which the IPU is requested to share with the United Nations. Members of the IPU may also wish to submit this communiqué to their respective parliaments.

Sustainable development is now at a crossroads. In a finite world, the perennial cycle of increasing consumption and production that is at the heart of the current economic model is no longer sustainable. Growth alone is not the answer to the social, economic and environmental challenges of our time; in fact it is becoming part of the problem. A different approach that focuses on well-being in all its dimensions is required if we are to evolve as a global community able to fulfil core human values of peace, solidarity and harmony with nature.

While growth is a necessary condition for development, and indeed has helped countless generations climb out of poverty, more attention now needs to be paid to the nature of growth and to the distribution of its benefits. Strong growth does not necessarily lead to increased human development and happiness. Conversely, with the right social policy balance it is possible to improve overall well-being even at low levels of economic growth. Job creation and the possibility for people to earn a decent living must be central to policies that support growth and well-being. In developing countries, material growth is essential if we are to eradicate extreme poverty and provide everyone with the necessities of life. Here too, environmental and social sustainability must be part of economic policy from the very start. This will be particularly important in view of population growth and the resultant urban explosion.

Ultimately, well-being consists of human factors that do not necessarily depend on unrestrained material consumption and production. Education, health, culture, leisure time, the practice of religion, the enjoyment of all human rights, emotional fulfilment, as well as a sense of belonging to a community, are all dimensions of human happiness that can be advanced at little cost to the environment and with huge social dividends. Supporting more of these goods should be another focus of a new model of growth and development. While the private sector must continue to lead in job creation, more jobs will be needed in the social sector and in infrastructure development, which benefits communities and minimizes the impact on the environment. Youth unemployment in particular must be given priority.

For well-being policies to succeed, it is imperative that gender inequalities are eradicated so as to unleash women's full potential as citizens and economic actors. Women, half of the global population, remain by far the most disadvantaged in all spheres of life. In many countries, discriminatory laws and cultural norms deprive women of economic opportunities, with less access to credit and lower wages. In most countries, barriers still exist, preventing women from entering political office or corporate boardrooms. Violence against women remains pervasive and further underscores women's vulnerability in most of our societies.

The transition to well-being policies will not be easy and the course has yet to be fully charted. Bold experimentation will be required. Decision-makers must work to reduce the vast inequalities of conditions and opportunities that exist today both within and between countries. Incentives and regulation must be put in place for market forces to work towards well-being. As a number of countries at various levels of development have shown, it is possible today for all governments to adopt measurements to help better target economic, social and environmental policies for human welfare. Measuring national well-being beyond mere GDP will be critical in redefining growth, not only in terms of material production and consumption, but also in terms of social and environmental progress.

The green economy, with its reliance inter alia on technological efficiency and environmentally friendly products, points us in the right direction but only if it is part of a broader policy framework. This will require fiscal incentives and policies to shift the composition of growth towards less resource-intensive production and consumption. A revised growth model will also need to rely more on distributive policies to spread wealth and opportunity more evenly in order to make economies more viable and strengthen well-being. Indeed, nothing undermines well-being more than a feeling of exclusion and deprivation in contrast to the excessive wealth of others.

Well-being policies will need to strive for a better balance between private interests and the common good, between competition and cooperation, and between private and public investments to produce goods that all can enjoy and that the planet can afford to support. In short, the pursuit of well-being as the ultimate purpose of development, and of human progress, will require a new social contract premised on a vision of the planet and of people as assets to be nurtured. The guiding principle of "Buen vivir" should be paired with "Ubuntu", the African dictum that the success of one depends on the success of the whole community.

To achieve this vision of development, greater global cooperation will be required. Developed countries bear a greater responsibility for global sustainable development and the eradication of extreme poverty. More pro-active efforts to place developed countries' economies on a sustainable path will be needed. More efforts will also be required to facilitate green technology transfers to developing countries, including technologies to mitigate the effects of climate change and other environmental emergencies. Development cooperation must be increased and made more accountable to both donor and recipient countries. It should also aim more directly at supporting well-being.

Re-thinking the growth-centric economic model will also require a different kind of globalization: based more on solidarity and cooperation than on unfettered competition. The international economic, financial and trade architecture tends to reinforce the wrong growth model and remains tilted in favour of entrenched interests. There must be policies to reduce the excessive power, both economic and political, of transnational corporations and financial conglomerates. The increasing concentration of land ownership in a few hands undermines the livelihood of the rural poor. Since a more equitable land distribution leads to higher growth and improved human development, this problem needs to be addressed.

By definition, well-being policies require *all* citizens, and particularly vulnerable groups such as women, youth, indigenous peoples and the poor, to participate in decision-making. Being able to participate in the decisions that affect our lives and the social and environmental context around us is in itself a key dimension of well-being. Conversely, well-being is also necessary for citizens to participate effectively in the management of public affairs. Participation and its attendants of transparency and accountability are in turn key pillars of democracy and of the way democracy applies to the functioning of government at all levels - global, national and local - and in response to citizens' needs.

Participation, transparency and accountability constitute the core of *democratic governance*, which is an end in itself and an enabler of sustainable development. There can be no true prosperity without respect for the universal values of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. Democratic governance should therefore be a stand-alone goal among the new Sustainable Development Goals, as well as a dimension of other goals that will be part of the future development framework. This is further supported by the results of a survey of hundreds of members carried out during the Assembly.

To help steer sustainable development on a new course, a rebalancing between the role of the market and that of government is called for. Effective ways to help reconcile market needs with social imperatives include the development of private-public partnerships, community-based enterprises and other forms of cooperative models. Government intervention to guarantee the rights of the very poor and to safeguard the natural resource base will also be needed. The interdependent challenges of sustainable development require a concerted approach that only governments can initiate and help implement.

To this effect, it will be more important than ever for parliaments to assert their legitimate place in the decision-making process at the national and international levels. The institution of parliament is pivotal to the entire architecture of democratic governance and needs to be strengthened virtually everywhere in the world, with greater oversight capacities and legislative authority. More specifically, stronger parliaments will have to play a central role in the implementation of the future Sustainable Development Goals. This will include ensuring that development policies and plans are drawn up through participatory and inclusive processes, and with regular progress reports submitted to parliament for review.

This debate should continue in national parliaments as a way of engaging them in the global consultations foreseen in the Rio outcome document, aptly called *The Future We Want*.