



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Statement before the Second Committee of the General Assembly

Agenda item 22 (a): Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries

Introduced by: Ms. Karin Riedl

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Chairperson,

Members of parliament arrived at the Istanbul conference last May at the end of a long process of consultations - amongst themselves and with the UN – that had one clear objective: to make sure that this time around, as governments were about to design yet another decade-long plan for the Least Developed Countries, the role of parliaments would not be forgotten. That objective has been achieved, and today the Istanbul Programme of Action and accompanying Political Declaration mark a significant milestone on the road toward the recognition of national parliaments as key stakeholders in the development enterprise.

Paragraph 37 of the IPOA could not be clearer: “parliaments have an important role in debating development strategies as well as overseeing their implementation. The engagement of parliaments will ensure effectiveness, transparency and accountability in the design, implementation and review of the policies and programmes in the context of the Programme of Action.” Similar language appears in paragraph 16 of the Political Declaration. Other direct or indirect references to the role of parliaments dot several other sections of the IPOA.

Having won a seat at the table, as it were, we must now turn the attention of parliaments toward implementation. The IPOA is not perfect and does not include enough targets, but it still sets a very clear course for all of us to follow in the ten years ahead. An overarching goal now is to mainstream the IPOA through national development strategies and plans so that it permeates the thinking of decision-makers from the very beginning of the policy process.

Ten years go fast in the life of international organizations, and so we have already begun to plan. Here at the UN, the IPU participated in the first post-IPOA inter-agency meeting this past summer and agreed to a five-year roadmap to try to build synergies with the UN operation on the ground. We are grateful to OHRLLS for including us in this process from the start.

In its broad outline, our plan aims to mainstream the IPOA through the work of parliaments so that the relevant committees are fully aware of the policy prescriptions of the IPOA and are able to oversee their implementation by the government. This sounds

easy, but it is not: in many parliaments, particularly in the LDCs, there is no regular reporting from the government on the implementation of international development agreements and when this happens it is often perfunctory and with weak oversight.

As part of this plan, for which we are currently fundraising, we will also try to extend an existing network of parliamentary focal points. The first task of these focal points will be to work with colleagues to perform an assessment of their parliament's institutional capacities, including the committee system, to integrate the IPOA into the legislative and budgetary process.

The focal points are meant to motivate others and to help process and channel information from outside sources, including information derived from the global follow up that the IPU will be involved in. A critical ingredient for this plan to work effectively will be the creation of parallel UN focal points, inside the Resident Coordinator office, to provide regular backstopping and capacity building to their parliamentary counterparts. At the end of the day, what we would like every parliament to do is to adopt a clear *Action Plan* that outlines the various steps of how it sees its role in the implementation of the IPOA going forward. A model Action Plan has already been developed by the IPU and distributed to all parliaments.

Quite aside from the work of the parliamentary focal points, we are also beginning to support specific activities to raise awareness of the IPOA in parliaments and to create tools for parliamentarians to work with. Just this week, at our Assembly in Bern, Switzerland, we held a first major briefing for parliamentarians - since the actual Istanbul conference - to begin hammer in some of the main messages of the IPOA. The briefing took place in the context of our Committee on UN Affairs and featured the High Representative himself, Mr. Diarra. We also took the opportunity to introduce a Guidance Note for Members of Parliament on mainstreaming the IPOA. The Guidance Note focuses specifically on the pros and cons of creating dedicated parliamentary structures for the IPOA vs. those of working from the start with the existing portfolio committees.

In November we will also organize a workshop at the parliament of Cambodia where we will be having an in-depth discussion on some of these same institutional questions. This being the first parliamentary workshop on the IPOA in which we are involved, we will use the opportunity to gauge the needs of members of parliament and begin to develop a model format for more of such workshops to take place in other parliaments on a regular basis.

To conclude, Mr. Chairperson, the IPU looks forward to this new decade as one of tremendous opportunity for the LDCs. It is possible for many of them to achieve graduation during this time. So let's not be distracted, and let's not fall into the belief that the LDCs must wait until other emergencies are addressed. We must all work together and without delay for the implementation of the IPOA.

Thank you.