



## INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Second Committee of the General Assembly.  
Agenda item 53: Sustainable development

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Madam Chairperson,

The concept of sustainable development consists of a synthesis of social, economic and environmental considerations. To this day, it remains poorly understood by decision-makers at the national level. This is perhaps the single most important reason why the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and other such international commitments have yet to produce the expected results.

The IPU is committed to promoting sustainable development approaches among parliaments and their members. We also strive to create common ground among parliamentarians through our various political processes. At one such instance, the IPU Assembly that took place in Nairobi this past spring, several hundred members of parliament from around the world and from all sides of the political spectrum adopted a resolution on “the role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment.”

This resolution, which we have circulated in the General Assembly early in the session, contains several elements of interest for the purpose of today’s discussion. Among other things, the resolution “*encourages the development of green budgeting based on the model of gender budgeting*”. It calls for “*the promotion of sustainable public procurement; [and]... for “governments to include in their budgets clear indications of the financial and non financial costs related to environmental degradation, and the benefits of ecosystem service.”* The resolution further “*invites parliaments to promote the development of new and broader tools and methods for measuring GDP and other standardized economic concepts, said tool and methods to take account of the value of natural resources, in order to enhance sustainable development.*”

Madam Chairperson,

It is normally the responsibility of parliaments to debate and eventually adopt the national budget. To our reckoning, the Nairobi resolution is the first time ever that members of parliament agreed that the budget document should be looked at through the prism of the environment.

Green budgets are very different from traditional ones in many respects. At bottom, green budgets take a longer and more comprehensive perspective: they think of economic growth and the overall economic well-being of the nation not just in terms of this year’s GDP, the balance between government revenues and expenditures, and other standard economic indicators, but also in terms of the cost of environmental degradation and exploitation as well as the cost of health and social services that can be attributed to certain kinds of consumption and production. Green budgets bring about a rethinking of the way we count and manage public funds and assets from the standpoint of sustainability. In so doing, they help harmonize the economy with a variety of environmental and

social objectives, advancing sustainable development at the very top of policy-making.

Needless to say, the text agreed upon in Nairobi is not in itself sufficient to move us forward. It still needs to be taken on board at home. What the resolution has already accomplished, however, is to help prepare the political terrain for this kind of discussion to take place in many countries as well as in the international arena, where a strong, high-level pronouncement on the subject of green budgets has yet to be made.

A great deal of capacity building will be required in order to enable countries to transition toward green accounting practices. Change will not occur overnight. There are a lot of complex technical aspects that need explaining, especially to developing countries; and government ministries and budget offices will need to be equipped with appropriate accounting methodologies and statistical capacities.

As we have seen at the IPU over the years, working closely with parliaments and their members to help them understand and implement new concepts can yield large payoffs. Our work to instil a gender dimension in the budgetary process, through seminars and publications, is extremely successful in the parliamentary community and is paying high dividends in many countries.

Last year, together with UNITAR we began a training programme for members of parliament on environmental issues. The programme is focusing currently on the sustainable management of water, biodiversity, and energy. It will develop an average of two regional seminars for parliamentarians a year – the latest of which took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon. As part of this programme, next year work will begin on a handbook for parliamentarians on sustainable development which, we hope, will also include a first exposure to the concrete applications of green budget principles.

In conclusion, we would urge the United Nations and its member states to build on the proposals developed by members of parliament in Nairobi to develop a national budget that is sensitive to the needs of and compatible with sustainable development.

Thank you