



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

THE PARLIAMENTARY TRACK TO LDC IV

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for the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries
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Mr. Chairman,

I am thankful for the opportunity today to update you on our efforts to help bring about a strong parliamentary contribution to the Fourth UN Conference on the LDCs, and to its follow up.

Specifically, I will expound on the three main components of our work in Istanbul, namely, a Parliamentary Forum, a parliamentary message to the Conference, and the launch of a new initiative to actively mobilize parliaments in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPOA).

For ease of reference, let me recall briefly the three main **objectives of the parliamentary track** that the IPU is coordinating with the support of the Office of the High Representative, namely: 1/ to facilitate the contribution of parliaments to the national review, the substantive consultations and, as appropriate, to the outcome document of the conference; 2/ to encourage the participation of MPs in the UN conference and in national preparations for the event; and 3/ to engage parliaments in the implementation of the new IPOA over the next decade.

The **Parliamentary Forum** will be a one-day event on 8 May, the eve of the conference. As I mentioned at our last meeting, since the outcome document of the conference will have been drawn up by the time we gather in Istanbul, the Forum will be in equal parts a stock-taking exercise and a planning opportunity for parliaments to begin to identify the ways and means in which they can support the IPOA. The Forum is being organized jointly by the IPU, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, and the Office of the High Representative (OHRLLS), and we are pleased that the UN Secretary-General has also confirmed his availability to join us for the opening of the our event.

A joint letter of invitation was sent on 2 March to all Speakers of Parliament, alerting them to both the Forum and the Conference, and encouraging them to seek the inclusion of parliamentarians in the national delegations to the UN conference. Thanks in no small part to the generosity of the Government of Turkey and of the Office of the High Representative (OHRLLS), who together are covering the participation costs of two MPs from each LDC parliament, we expect a good turnout of at least 200 MPs.

Since most national delegations are yet to be announced, please allow me encourage all of you again to be mindful of the need to include members of parliament in such delegations.

That, incidentally, would also be consistent with the provisions of recent GA resolutions on cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU. As much as possible, the parliamentarians should come from both majority and opposition parties, and should strive for gender balance so as to include both men and women.

As for the programme of the Forum, copies of which are available in the back of the room, we have tried to give it a forward-looking focus so that we don't just look at the past ten years, but also consider the concrete actions that parliaments can take in support of the IPOA going forward. For example, we will be discussing the need for parliaments to draw up an **Action Plan** of their own with clear operational objectives. The meeting is also being designed to be as interactive as possible, featuring four short segments that will include group exercises and brief presentations from the floor. We will also inform the MPs on the proceedings of the conference and particularly the many special events where their participation will be encouraged. In short, we want the Forum to help build momentum and excitement among parliamentarians about the new IPOA.

As for the **Parliamentary message** to the main Conference, this will consist of a short political statement, which will be finalized on the occasion of the forthcoming IPU Assembly in mid-April, where we are expecting high level delegations from practically all of our member parliaments. We trust this message will be well received by the UN Conference on the LDCs, and we do hope that it will be distributed to all delegations as part of the main documentation kit. More importantly, the message is designed to inspire parliaments as to their *own* commitment to the LDCs. Among other things, it will identify the broad spectrum of issues affecting the LDCs in today's global context, seek to balance out pro-active government policies with market-based approaches, and express support for stronger partnerships at all levels and between all stakeholders.

The message will stress the importance of governance as a pre-requisite to development. It will identify the specific role and responsibility of parliaments as pillars of good governance, calling on parliaments, among other things, to improve their own processes and working methods, perform more stringent reviews of national development plans and reports, and make sure that the political process in their countries is open, inclusive, representative and accountable to the people. The message will be formally introduced to the conference in a statement that we hope can be delivered on the first day and that will also report on the outcome of the Parliamentary Forum as well as the overall parliamentary track.

The third and final contribution to the conference will consist of a **project proposal, which builds on past UN-IPU cooperation**, to further mobilize parliaments in the implementation of the IPOA during the entire decade, and with a first phase already charted for the period through 2015. The project is a joint undertaking of IPU and OHRLLS with the support of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, UNDP and possibly other partners and donors. The main objective of the project will be to get parliaments to review and evaluate how they work on development issues and particularly plans like the IPOAs, including by looking at their internal mechanisms for oversight and policy making, as well as by examining the way in which parliaments interact with outside constituencies.

Practically speaking, the project foresees the expansion of the current system of parliamentary focal points to all LDC parliaments as well as to non-LDC parliaments. It also aims to establish a regular flow

of policy-related information and an exchange of best practices, directly at the country level, between the parliamentary focal points, the government focal points, and the UN Resident Coordinator.

In keeping with specific requests from parliaments, and as reflected in several past reports on the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action, the project will also help strengthen capacities and provide specific tools to enable parliaments to work more effectively in support of the IPOA and in fact all other development plans.

Mr. Chairman,

As a last point and with reference to the on-going negotiations of the Istanbul outcome document, I would like to say that we were very pleased with the original proposals contained in the zero draft, which we felt addressed many of the concerns raised throughout the preparatory process. Those included: clearly identifying the need for parliamentary engagement so as to help achieve national ownership of the IPOA and of development in general; fostering greater and stronger interaction between the executive and the legislative branches in a spirit of cooperation, but with clearly defined roles assigned; strengthening the capacities of parliaments, particularly in the LDCs, to carry out their oversight, legislative and budgetary roles; recognizing the work of parliaments in making aid more effective; and strengthening the link between parliaments and civil society.

As one would expect, that zero draft got dissected in the course of negotiations so that now key passages are being reformulated or deleted altogether. We would like to invite member States not to lose track of those important concepts and to make sure that they are reflected adequately in the final document. It would be a disappointment to arrive in Istanbul, only to find a repeat of the Brussels POA, where parliaments were not even mentioned. I can assure you that there will be a lot of good will coming from parliaments and parliamentarians in Istanbul, and we need to make sure that it is maintained and developed upon.

In closing, let me wish you all the best with your deliberations this week and of course with the conference in just over a month from now. As far as the IPU is concerned, it has been a very rewarding experience already and we sincerely look forward to this conference as one of our best examples of parliamentary engagement globally and with the United Nations.

Thank you.