



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Thematic Debate of the General Assembly
on Climate Change**

Statement by Ambassador Anda Filip
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Mr. President,
Distinguished representatives,

The Inter-Parliamentary Union, the world organisation of parliaments, has concerned itself with the environment at many of its recent Assemblies. In the last few years, it has debated climate change, energy security, environmental degradation, natural disasters, and the protection of biodiversity. Its members have negotiated and adopted resolutions, which in many cases have served to mobilize parliamentary action on the respective issues.

The Fourth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has laid to rest any lingering ideas that climate change was a natural phenomenon. The broad consensus that human beings are responsible for damage to their environment has opened a new chapter in the world's realisation that something needs to be done urgently. Parliamentarians are keenly aware that legislatures are a vital part of the process.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon told the 116th IPU Assembly, held in Bali in April last year, that when it comes to climate change, the cost of inaction far outweighs the cost of action. Parliaments, he said, have a contribution to make in ensuring that the necessary resources are made available, adding that their legislative role is especially important, since in their hands lies considerable power to forge the laws, guidelines, frameworks and incentives that will allow business, industry and other actors to play their part in achieving deep and necessary emissions cuts.

The IPU Assembly in Bali closed with the adoption of a Presidential Declaration on Climate Change. The Declaration called on parliaments to reinforce climate change policy and legislation with a view to achieving the ultimate objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol. The parliamentarians pledged to raise the issue of climate change in their respective parliaments and to engage with government ministers on preparations for the UNFCCC Conference of Parties, held in Bali last December.

The Declaration also called on parliaments to foster better understanding by local communities of the threat of climate change and the action needed to avert dangerous human interferences in the climate system.

Different examples may be quoted of reactions within parliaments, in follow-up to the Bali parliamentary declaration. The parliament of Chile has started to look at ways to make the national budget more environment-friendly. The German Bundestag Committee on the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety has recently debated several motions on proposed climate protection measures tabled by the parliamentary groups. The Bundestag also sets an example for climate protection and energy efficiency in the operation of its own buildings. In Israel, the Knesset Committee for Internal Affairs and the Environment is currently preparing the second and third readings of the clean air bill. A recent session of the Japanese Diet has seen the enactment of a law relating to the promotion of government contracts that pay due

consideration to environmental concerns, assessing the environmental load of each project rather than simply looking at price competitiveness. In the UK, the parliamentary Joint Committee on the Draft Climate Change Bill, which aims to reduce the net UK carbon account by at least 60 per cent from the 1990 baseline by the year 2050, expressed its concerns recently about the legal enforceability of the targets and budgets, and proposed a system of annual milestones and a compliance mechanism to create a strong legal framework. In Belarus, the parliament is currently debating two bills designed to mitigate climate change, one to amend the environmental protection law on compensation for environmental damage, and the other concerning a draft code on earth resources. Many other examples can be quoted.

Mr. President,

Parliaments alone will not save the world from its own extinction by greenhouse gases. That will be done by the right partnerships being forged between governments, civil society and the private sector, putting the interests of the general public before more narrow concerns. What parliaments can do, however, as the UN Secretary General suggested, is lay the legal foundations necessary for such partnerships to really work in practice. They can also play a useful role in explaining to the public why radical action is in their best interests.

To do this as effectively as possible, parliamentarians are increasingly immersing themselves in international debate and making greater efforts to keep abreast of the issues and proposals, both at the United Nations and elsewhere. This is something the IPU facilitates, in keeping with its stated objectives. Three areas of focus for parliaments in the future emerged from the debates at the IPU Assembly in Bali. They constitute the main pillars of a new global parliamentary campaign on climate change.

Under the heading of leadership, parliaments can promote more robust national commitment to global cooperation in climate observation and research; they can engage national stakeholders, civil society and local industry in discussion of national action plans. They can initiate work to estimate adaptation needs and to include them in social, economic and development planning; monitor the publication of regular "green accounting" government reports, and make sure that parliament is a place in which innovative financial mechanisms and new technologies are amply discussed.

Under the heading of knowledge and its dissemination, parliaments can foster better understanding within the community of the threat of climate change and the action needed to avert dangerous human interference in the climate system; draw on their countries' experts from the most recent IPCC report to promote a better understanding at all levels of society of the climate change issue; spread a better understanding of the socially optimum level of mitigation; and monitor local news for misinformation about climate change and respond publicly where necessary.

Under the third heading, technology transfer and capacity building, parliaments can strengthen national support for the transfer of greenhouse-friendly technologies to the

developing countries; and support capacity building for adaptation to natural climate variables and human induced climate change in developing countries.

In the international arena, the IPU campaign will seek to compile good practices, pinpointing case studies where legislators have been instrumental in plans and projects that have proved their worth. Members of parliament will meet regularly to talk with the scientific community to forge a shared understanding of what is practical and workable in societies, especially poor ones. Finally, they will channel these findings into the international arena in order to better inform the international organisations of how progress can be made, and how the “win-win” solutions can take real shape.

I thank you for your attention.