



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

132nd IPU Assembly

Hanoi (Viet Nam), 28 March - 1 April 2015



Governing Council
Item 6

CL/196/6(b)-R.1
16 March 2015

Annual report by the Secretary General on the activities of the IPU for 2014

(b) Annual reporting exercise by Members

According to the IPU's Statutes and Rules, Member Parliaments are required to send an annual report informing the Organization of any action taken by their parliaments to follow-up on IPU resolutions and decisions (Article 6) and submit a report to their national parliaments after each statutory Assembly on the work and decisions taken during the event (Article 7).

Over the past two years, one of the main issues on the IPU agenda at its Assemblies and in terms of cooperation with the United Nations system has been the shaping of the post-2015 development agenda. Outcome documents from IPU Assemblies and the annual Parliamentary Hearings at the UN have issued a number of recommendations for parliamentary action in this critical area.

As such, Members have been invited to respond to a Survey on their engagement in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As was the case with previous reporting exercises, the response rate continues to be low, with only 57 of the IPU's 166 Member Parliaments (34%) responding to the survey. The main findings are presented below.

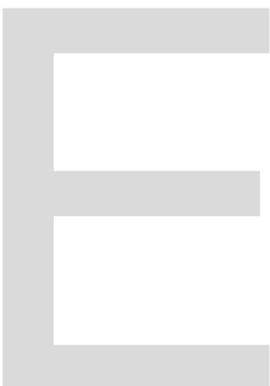
Parliaments' response to the SDGs: A preliminary survey

In preparation for the 132nd IPU Assembly, whose main theme is *The Sustainable Development Goals: Turning words into action*, IPU Members were invited to respond to a questionnaire on the role of parliaments in the negotiation process for the new goals and on how parliaments are preparing to implement the goals after their official adoption in September 2015. The objective of the survey, in which 57 parliaments have participated to date, is to establish and share parliamentary practices and experiences.

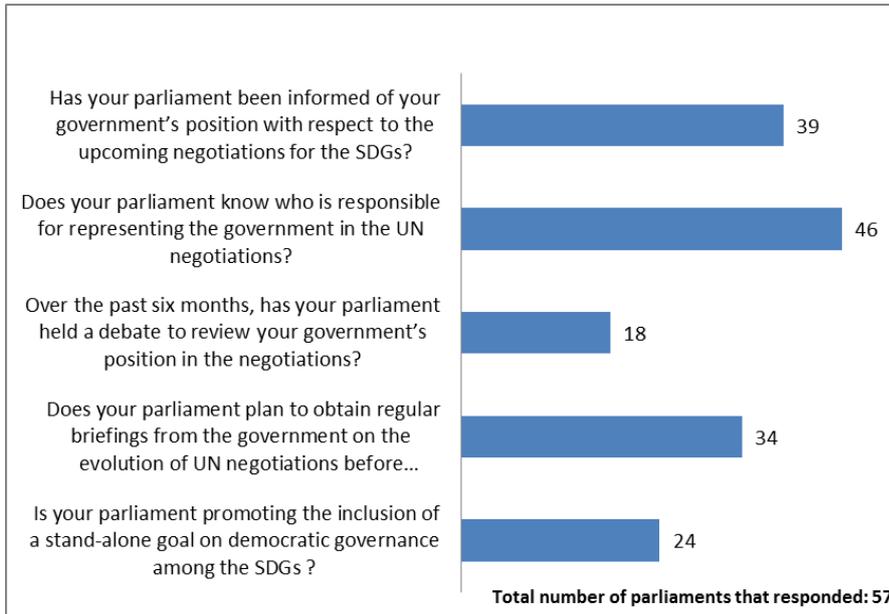
The survey results provide encouraging signs of parliamentary engagement on the SDGs. However, in many countries, parliamentary involvement in the negotiation process appears to be weak. Parliaments are generally behind in their own preparations for implementation. An overview of the individual responses, which were collected up to 13 March 2015, is available in Annex.¹

A. *Many parliaments are informed of their government's position, but relatively few take action to help shape the debate*

UN Member States have all but agreed to a list of 17 SDGs and accompanying 169 targets. Parliamentary involvement in the negotiations in the coming months is crucial to ensuring a strong political Declaration that acknowledges the important role of parliaments in achieving sustainable development.



Some governments open the door to parliamentary engagement by keeping their MPs abreast of debates related to the SDGs. A total of 39 out of the 57 parliaments reported that they had been informed of their government’s position with respect to the negotiations on the SDGs at the United Nations. Some parliaments reported that their governments consult with them on certain aspects of the negotiation. For example, The **Netherlands**’ Committee on Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation holds regular meetings with the Minister regarding the SDGs within the framework of the Meeting of the European Union Council of Ministers on Development Cooperation. Similarly, **Switzerland**’s Foreign Affairs Committee in the National Council was consulted on the country’s position on the post-2015 development agenda, and the Foreign Policy Committee of the Council of States was briefed on the modalities for the UN Summit, when the SDGs will be launched.



Parliaments and the governance goal

*In support of the IPU campaign for a democratic governance goal in the SDGs, which would emphasize the significance of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, a total of 24 parliaments reported that they promoted such a goal in their discussions with the government. The Chair of the British Group IPU, for example, wrote to the UK Minister of the Department for International Development to convey the Quito Communiqué in support of a democratic governance goal. The parliament of **Finland** reported that although parliament itself did not promote a stand-alone goal on democratic governance, several individual members of parliament (MPs) did.*

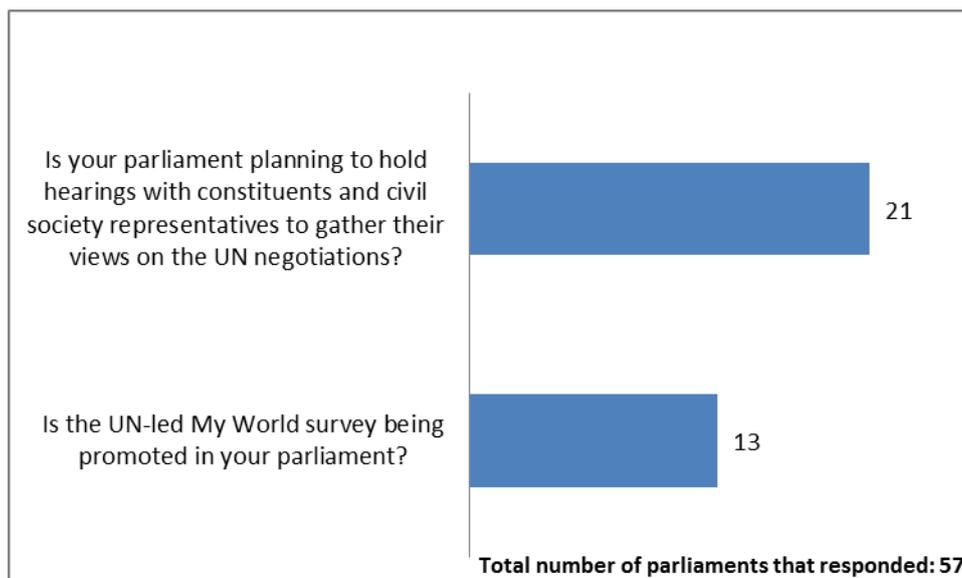
Even when the government fails to report on the negotiations, parliaments are likely to know who to approach for information: a total of 46 parliaments stated that they had a clear sense of who in the executive branch is supposed to represent the government in the UN negotiations.

The survey results indicate nevertheless that parliaments tend to take a backseat in the official negotiations. Few parliaments attempted to shape the negotiations revolving around the individual goals. Only 18 parliaments held debates in plenary or in committee to review their governments’ position in the negotiations in the last six months leading up to the agreement on the Goals.

Only a few months remain before agreement is made official in summer 2015, yet not all parliaments indicate

that they will enhance efforts to get involved in the process. Just over half of the respondents, a total of 34 parliaments, plan to obtain regular briefings from their governments on the evolution of UN negotiations during the coming months.

Several parliaments provided notable examples of parliamentary involvement in the SDGs process. A report of the **Australian** Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee in March 2014 considered, among other things, the role of Australian aid in supporting the SDGs. **Germany**’s parliament discussed in plenary the financial, social, economic, ecological, and political aspects of the SDGs process and, specifically, the impact on social inequality.



A main function of every parliament is to represent constituents' views and interests. It is encouraging that 21 parliaments stated that they were planning to hold hearings with constituents and civil society representatives in order to gather their views on the UN negotiations. Several parliaments reported on their efforts to involve the general public directly in the negotiation process and to inform citizens of the SDGs. **Germany** held a public hearing of the Committee on Economic Cooperation and Development

Inter-parliamentary cooperation can strengthen national parliamentary capacities

A few responses suggest that inter-parliamentary cooperation is helpful to get parliaments involved in negotiations or to prepare them for implementation.

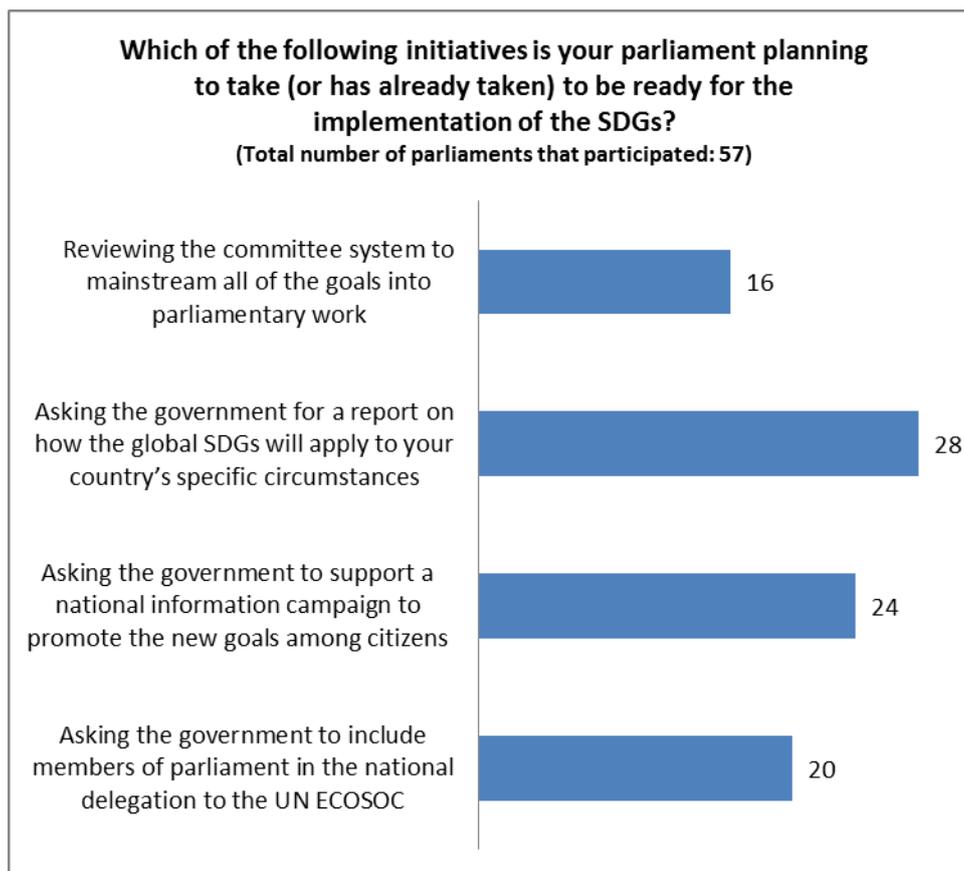
Indonesia, at the initiative of the Committee for Inter-parliamentary Cooperation of the House of Representatives, hosted a Parliamentary Event on MDGs Acceleration and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which was attended by parliamentarians from 20 countries of the Asia-Pacific region. The parliament of **France** will host MEDCOP21, which will bring together parliamentarians from the Mediterranean region with other stakeholders to develop a positive agenda for mitigation and adaptation to climate change, and jointly with the IPU the Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21/CMP11) in Paris, December 2015.

on "The Post-MDG and SDG process" in 2013 and is planning to hold another public hearing on the post-2015 agenda during the first half of 2015. In **Mexico**, parliamentarians have participated in a number of panel discussions on issues revolving around the SDGs to inform the public about the relevance and impact of the SDGs.

The UN-led *My World* survey, which provides insight into citizens' views on the SDGs, is an invaluable tool for parliamentarians to better understand the interests and needs of their constituents. This tool, however, appears to be largely underutilized, given that only 13 parliaments reported actively promoting it with their members. A good example was set by the IPU Group of **Romania**, which has disseminated information about the objectives, scope, and main results of the *My World* survey through its reports and publications.

B. Parliaments are slow in preparing for the implementation of the SDGs

The complex framework of the SDGs presents a number of challenges for parliaments in terms of assuming ownership of the goals and the ability to mainstream them throughout the policy process. Communication with constituents in order to educate them on the SDGs and, ultimately, to effectively monitor the impact of government policies is crucial. The survey results indicate that several parliaments are preparing for this challenge but that many more need to become active if they are to be ready for implementation when the SDGs come into effect in January 2016.



Parliaments require a coordination mechanism to advance the SDGs framework and to monitor its implementation. The survey indicates that much needs to be done in this respect; only 16 parliaments have reviewed or are in the process of reviewing their committee system to mainstream the SDGs into parliamentary work. Several parliaments stated that reviewing their committee system was unnecessary as their existing committee structure was considered adequate to the task. For example, **Hungary** and the **Seychelles** already have Standing Committees for Sustainable Development in place; **India** reported that the existing Committees have been dealing with issues pertaining to sustainable development since parliament's inception.

Previous IPU work has shown that parliaments need to mainstream the SDGs into *all* relevant committees, avoiding "ghettoizing" the issue. Thus, when the Committee system of the Senate of **Romania** was reviewed in 2014 in order to set up the Standing Committee on Transport and Energy, the distribution of competencies among the Standing Committees was revised in a manner that allows for a better parliamentary approach to the SDGs and related processes.

A dedicated SDGs committee can facilitate mainstreaming if it is appropriately placed within the whole committee architecture and has a role to play in key processes such as the budget. Other parliamentary bodies, such as caucuses or parliamentary forums, can provide alternative platforms for debate. For example, **India's** parliament supports several parliamentary forums dealing with issues related to the SDGs, including on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Water Conservation and Management, Global Warming and Climate Change.

A fair number of parliaments stated that they will push governments to take stock of the policy implications of the SDGs in the national context, which, in turn, can serve as a basis for parliamentary work. A total of 28 parliaments reported that they will ask the government for a report on how the global SDGs will apply to their country's specific circumstances.

Similarly, 24 parliaments said that they will ask their government to support a national information campaign to promote the new goals among citizens. Some parliaments are cooperating with the government to host public information events on the SDGs. For example, the National Assembly of **Viet Nam** cooperates with the relevant government agencies to exchange views and organize meetings, hearings, workshops and seminars on issues pertaining to the SDGs. **Venezuela's** parliament cooperates with the government on data collection in preparation for the implementation phase. **Mali's** parliament plans to organize regular consultations with both government and civil society on issues that are relevant to the implementation of the SDGs.

In terms of parliamentary participation in national delegations to future UN meetings to track SDG progress, only a total of 20 parliaments stated that they would ask the government to include Members of Parliament in the delegation to the Economic and Social Council, the UN body that will take the lead in monitoring the implementation of the SDGs at the global level.

OVERVIEW OVER SURVEY RESPONSES

- Q1: Has your parliament been informed of your government’s position with respect to the upcoming negotiations for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the United Nations?
- Q2: Over the past six months, has your parliament held a debate (in plenary or in committee) to review your government’s position in the negotiations?
- Q3: Does your parliament plan to obtain regular briefings from the government on the evolution of UN negotiations before agreement is reached in summer of 2015?
- Q4: Does your parliament have a clear sense of who in the executive branch is responsible for representing the government in the UN negotiations?
- Q5: Is your parliament planning to hold hearings with constituents and civil society representatives to gather their views on the UN negotiations?
- Q6: Is your parliament promoting the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on democratic governance among the SDGs (as per the Quito Communiqué and the recommendations of the Parliamentary Hearings at the UN)?
- Q7: The UN-led *My World* survey provides insight into citizens views on the SDGs (<http://data.myworld2015.org/>). Is this survey being promoted in your parliament?
- Q8: Which of the following initiatives is your parliament planning to take (or has already taken) to be ready for the implementation of the SDGs starting 1 January 2016?

(Tick all those that apply)

- Q8a: *Reviewing the committee system to mainstream all of the goals into the work of parliament (including the establishment of a caucus or committee on the SDGs)*
- Q8b: *Asking the government for a report on how the global SDGs will apply to your country’s specific circumstances*
- Q8c: *Asking the government to support a national information campaign to promote the new goals among citizens*
- Q8d: *Asking the government to include members of parliament in the national delegation to the UN Economic and Social Council, where the SDGs will be reviewed every July*

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8a	Q8b	Q8c	Q8d
Australia	1	0	maybe	1	1	0	0	0	maybe	maybe	maybe
Austria	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1
Belgium	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bangladesh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Burkina Faso	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1
Burundi (National Assembly)	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Burundi (Senate)	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Cambodia	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
Chile	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8a	Q8b	Q8c	Q8d
Côte d'Ivoire	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Croatia	1	0	1	1	maybe	0	0	0	1	1	0
Cyprus	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Czech Republic (Chamber of Deputies)	0	0	maybe	1	maybe	1	0	maybe	1	0	maybe
Czech Republic (Senate)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denmark	1	1	1	1	maybe	maybe	0	0	maybe	maybe	maybe
Djibouti	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
Estonia	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1
Finland	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	
France (National Assembly)	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
France (Senate)	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gabon	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Germany	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	maybe	1	1	1
Hungary	1	1		1	1	1	1	0 ¹	1	1	
India	1		1	1							
Indonesia	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1
Japan	1	1	maybe	1	maybe		0	0	1	1	0
Jordan	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Latvia	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Lebanon ²	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lithuania	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Luxembourg	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mali	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Mexico	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1
Moldova (Republic of)	0	0	0	1		0	0	0	0	0	

¹ Hungary's parliament already has a Committee dedicated to the SDGs in place and, therefore, does not need to review the Committee system.

² The Lebanese Parliament reported that the Sustainable Development Initiative was in the agenda of the Public Work Committee between 2009-2010 period, in collaboration with the UNDP. The current political instabilities, however, forced the parliament to shift its priorities.

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8a	Q8b	Q8c	Q8d
Myanmar	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Netherlands	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New Zealand	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	maybe	maybe	maybe	maybe
Niger	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Norway	1	0	1	1	0	0	0				
Poland	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Portugal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Romania		0	1	1	1		1	³	1		
San Marino	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sao Tome and Principe	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Senegal	1	0	1	1	0	0	0		1		0
Serbia	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
Seychelles	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Slovakia	1	0			0	1					
Slovenia	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spain	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sri Lanka	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
Switzerland	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0			0
Tajikistan	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1
Thailand	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Trinidad & Tobago	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Uganda	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
United Kingdom	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
Uruguay (Senate)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Venezuela	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Viet Nam	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1

ⁱ Responses received after 13 March 2015 will be reflected in a second issue of this report

³ The Senate's Committee system has been revised in March 2014, when a new Standing Committee for Transports and Energy was set up. The redistribution of competencies among the Standing Committees allows for a better parliamentary approach of the SDGs and related processes.