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Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(h)   Interregional Seminar on Parliamentary capacity-building and further implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
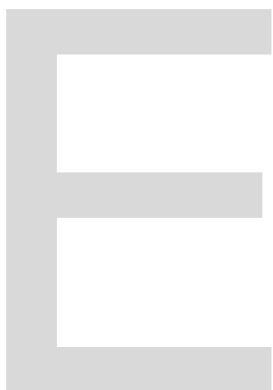
(Beijing, China, 18-20 September 2016)

Parliaments have a key role to play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by holding governments accountable for the goals they have subscribed to at the United Nations and making sure that enabling laws are passed and budgets adopted. Parliaments from developing countries have much to learn from each other in order to support effective SDGs implementation, which is why it is important to promote South-South parliamentary cooperation. It is against this backdrop that the National People's Congress of China and the IPU organized the Interregional seminar on parliamentary capacity-building and the further implementation of the SDGs. The Seminar was open to members of parliament and parliamentary staff from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda and Zambia.

The debates of the seminar focused on four main themes: (1) implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (2) the *One Belt and One Road Initiative* and implementation of the SDGs; (3) national governance and SDGs implementation; and (4) China's specific fields of action in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Experts from UNDP, the Chinese Government and a number of prominent Chinese think-tanks provided background information and helped frame the discussions.

Through these themes, the seminar examined how cooperation among developing countries could enhance implementation of the SDGs and their targets and further advance their development. The seminar allowed the participants to exchange ideas and experiences, and elaborate concrete strategies, actions and recommendations to advance parliamentary engagement and cooperation on the SDGs.

The participants agreed that it was necessary to familiarize parliamentarians in developing countries with the SDGs framework and its objectives, and raise awareness about the need to domesticate the goals. They learned about the Chinese development model and ways in which Chinese development assistance supported implementation of the SDGs through its support to 166 countries and international organizations. Such assistance was not dependent on the political situation in recipient countries but rather on their needs, in particular regarding infrastructure and technical capacity. Partnerships between the government and private sector are key to the success of these projects.

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In this context, the participants also learned about the *One Belt and One Road Initiative* that the Chinese Government had launched in September 2013. The initiative is a development strategy and framework that focuses on connectivity and cooperation between China and the countries of Asia and Europe with an ambition to expand globally. In addition, the seminar provided information about the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), an international financial institution initiated by the Government of China that aims to support the building of infrastructure in the Asia-Pacific region.

The seminar agreed that it was important for parliaments to galvanize political will for the implementation of the SDGs and create enabling legal environments for cooperation opportunities and development investment. Special attention should be paid to the needs of the most marginalized sectors and to lifting people out of poverty. By so doing, greater attention needed to be paid to "green" growth and ways to ensure sustainable economic development. The transfer of new technologies was seen as a first step towards meeting these objectives.

The seminar participants encouraged the IPU to continue to promote interregional exchanges so that experiences of parliamentary engagement on the SDGs at the regional and national levels could feed into the global level and encourage further progress.