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# 135<sup>th</sup> IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

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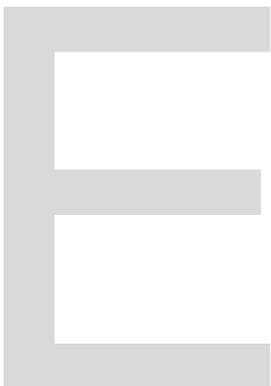
## Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

### (i) *Mobilizing Parliaments for the SDGs*

An official side event of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

(New York, 18 July 2016)

The United Nations High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is the main UN hub to review global progress on the SDGs over the next 15 years.<sup>1</sup> *Mobilizing Parliaments for the SDGs* was the first ever parliamentary side event to take place at the Forum and was open to all its participants. Thirty MPs from 16 national delegations attended.



#IPU135

<sup>1</sup> Further to this event, on 25 July, the General Assembly adopted resolution 70/298 entitled *Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU*. Paragraph 12 of that resolution “Welcomes the contribution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to the work of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, through the participation of parliamentarians, in convening a regular parliamentary side event on the work of parliaments to institutionalize the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Mr. Martin Chungong, IPU Secretary General, moderated a panel with Dr. Jiko Fatafehi Luveni, Speaker of the Parliament of Fiji, Mr. Futho Hoolho, Vice-President of the Senate of Lesotho, Ms. Karina Gould, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development and member of the Canadian House of Commons, and Mr. Mitchell Toomey, Director of the SDGs Action Campaign at the United Nations.

Mr. Chungong's opening statement emphasized that the SDGs need to be at the centre of policy-making. That was not only because of the long-term challenges the world was facing but also because of the need to address the underlying causes of current emergencies, from terrorism to natural disasters, and from unemployment to social unrest resulting from growing inequality. Mr. Chungong noted the importance of the governance goal (Goal 16) as an enabler of the entire SDG framework. He outlined the IPU's plan to support the SDGs, and to make that support a high priority among the Organization's strategic objectives.

The IPU's specific work on the SDGs included: a campaign for the adoption of parliamentary motions on the SDGs; workshops to raise awareness of the SDGs and provide parliaments with practical advice; a toolkit to help parliaments assess their own institutional capacities to mainstream the SDGs; and the engagement of parliaments in the voluntary national reviews that governments will present to the HLPF. The IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs would also be providing an institutional link to the HLPF with a special session on the SDGs in each of its meetings held during the first IPU Assembly of the year.

The panel presentations and the ensuing floor debate provided a good overview of how parliaments can help to implement the SDGs in the way that they legislate, hold governments accountable and represent their constituents:

- A number of parliaments are in the process of assessing their own capacities to institutionalize the SDGs according to the first precept of "leaving no one behind" and in a way that upholds the independence of the legislature from the executive. Various examples of support to parliaments available through the IPU and UNDP were presented. It was noted that an SDG institutional memory was needed in view of the high turnover of MPs that could be expected over the years.
- At least two parliaments (Trinidad and Tobago and Mali), have adopted motions on the SDGs. Both reported that the introduction and debate of these motions had helped greatly in raising awareness of the SDGs among MPs. An IPU survey prior to the HLPF session showed that three parliaments out of 22 were actively engaged in their countries' voluntary national reviews. These results suggest a long road ahead to ensure parliaments become fully engaged in the process.
- Establishing some kind of SDG focal point in the parliament will help to maintain the momentum toward achieving the Goals and to provide for greater policy coordination. Some parliaments have established full-fledged SDG committees, taskforces or caucuses. Others have assigned policy coordination tasks to existing structures, such as Committee Chair forums. Cross-party membership of such structures is key to their success.
- The SDGs need to be localized on a country-by-country basis through inclusive, participatory approaches. This should include a national SDGs plan derived from open and transparent consultations in parliament. The doors of parliament must be open to public scrutiny; but MPs should also reach out to people directly in their constituencies in as many ways as is practicable. MPs can play a key role in promoting the SDGs in terms that people can understand.
- More data disaggregation will be needed in order to identify the most vulnerable groups and their specific needs, to target policies more effectively and to track progress over time.
- The promotion, protection and realization of human rights should be the ultimate test of SDG implementation. Many parliaments need to be more inclusive of women and other under-represented groups in order for this human rights approach to take hold. That may require new electoral laws to provide for greater diversity of candidates and political perspectives.
- Ultimately, the SDGs capture issues that are already on the minds of MPs and citizens at large. The novelty of the SDGs is that they connect those issues synergistically and in a coherent framework. This framework will help parliaments do away with piecemeal policy-making.