

Strong democratic parliaments serving the people

IPU Strategy for 2017-2021

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(Geneva, 27 October 2016)*

VISION

We want a world where every voice counts, where democracy and parliaments are at the service of the people for peace and development.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) is the global organization of national parliaments.

We promote democratic governance, institutions and values, working with parliaments and parliamentarians to articulate and respond to the needs and aspirations of the people.

We work for peace, democracy, human rights, gender equality, youth empowerment and sustainable development through political dialogue, cooperation and parliamentary action.

CORE VALUES

These core values are intended to apply to the entire IPU community—its Members and the IPU Secretariat—and to serve as guiding principles for all of our actions.

Equality: Ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly, in the same way and no less favourably than others irrespective of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, political persuasion, sexual orientation or age. We promote equality with the ultimate aim of eliminating discrimination and injustice.

Inclusiveness: Harnessing the full spectrum of views, needs and concerns within society in order to foster a sense of belonging. We promote inclusive parliaments that mirror and represent the interests of all sectors of society.

Respect: Recognizing, showing regard for and valuing cultural, religious, ethnic, political, linguistic and other differences. We promote mutual respect as a prerequisite for constructive dialogue and resolving disputes.

Integrity: Acting with honour, openness and probity, without compromising the truth. Parliament's integrity as an institution and the integrity of its members are essential to its legitimacy. We act as an impartial broker in conflict or post-conflict situations.

Solidarity: Fostering a sense of community, togetherness and unity of interests for the world parliamentary community. Supporting each other and working together as one. We promote parliamentary solidarity in all our areas of work and inter-parliamentary cooperation.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Objective 1: Build strong, democratic parliaments

The core legislative, oversight, budgetary and representative functions of parliament are essential to the quality of a country's overall governance. The IPU's Strategy for 2017-2021 focuses on strengthening these core functions to enable parliaments to contribute to democracy and help meet the aspirations of the people. Parliament's role in ensuring accountability for commitments undertaken at all levels is crucial to the proper functioning of any democracy. This is also in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on strengthening the rule of law and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. We pursue an integrated approach, developing research and tools and establishing norms, then applying them in concrete ways in national contexts.

Promote standards-setting and knowledge generation

The IPU will continue to promote its criteria for democratic parliaments as outlined in *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*. We will encourage parliaments to assess their performance based on these criteria and will create mechanisms and tools for parliaments to review their performance on a voluntary basis. As and when the need arises, we will develop new standards and guidelines for good parliamentary practice.

We will continue to serve as the global platform for information gathering and dissemination, as well as knowledge generation, on parliaments, and parliamentary procedure and practice. We will further develop our online databases such as PARLINE, and collect and disseminate information on women in parliament and youth participation. On a regular basis and in cooperation with UNDP, the IPU will publish a *Global Parliamentary Report* on the state of the world's parliaments. We will pursue a publication programme focusing on parliaments' good practices, and new and emerging topics in parliamentary development.

Build institutional capacity

Effective, well-structured and well-resourced parliaments are essential to a vibrant democracy. The global development commitments articulated in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underline the importance of parliaments' contribution to good governance. The IPU will continue to strengthen parliaments around the globe, with a particular focus on parliaments in countries that have recently emerged from conflict and/or States that are undergoing a process of transition towards parliamentary democracy. We will provide tailored advice and programmes of assistance. In so doing, we will apply the *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments* by enabling parliaments to effectively develop their capacity to perform their legislative, oversight, budgetary and representative functions. In line with the Common Principles, IPU support will be underpinned by the premise that it is parliaments' responsibility to take the lead nationally in promoting democracy, the rule of law, human rights, including women's rights, and youth participation. To better serve the interest of parliaments, we will further coordinate our efforts in order to improve the quality and impact of our support. We will continue to build on our work on research, standards and good practices. The IPU is also mindful of the need to use new information and communication technologies (ICTs and e-Parliament), and will encourage parliaments to do so to modernize the way they function.

Objective 2: Advance gender equality and respect for women's rights

The IPU has been instrumental in advancing gender equality in and through parliaments. Its many achievements can only inspire further commitment and investment as social, economic and political obstacles to equality persist. We will support parliaments in becoming strong and gender-sensitive institutions able to drive the gender equality agenda. The IPU will promote legal reform to deliver on women's rights and empowerment. In meeting this objective, the IPU will work in close cooperation with key partners such as UN Women.

Support women's political empowerment

The IPU will continue its action to enhance women's access to parliament and strengthen their input to policymaking. We will advocate for the development of national strategies and help strengthen national frameworks that facilitate women's full and equal access to parliament. The IPU will support women members of parliament in their work, including by providing them with technical assistance and training, and we will build their capacity, including through the use of ICTs and mentorships for newly elected women MPs.

Promote gender-sensitive parliaments

The IPU has laid the foundation for transforming parliaments into gender-sensitive institutions. We will continue to support parliaments in their efforts to both embody gender equality and deliver it—through their organization, working modalities, functioning and capacities. We will develop standards and issue guidelines on gender-sensitive policies and procedures, and provide capacity-building support to parliamentary bodies that deal with gender equality and women's issues. This will help members of parliament and parliamentary staff to strengthen their capacities in gender mainstreaming and ensure the exchange of good practices. Building gender-sensitive parliaments will also provide a direct contribution to SDGs 5 and 16 and facilitate the mainstreaming of gender equality in the implementation of all the SDGs.

Ensure women's rights

Following on from the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing and the 1995 Beijing Platform of Action, work on gender equality must be accelerated and priority must be given to addressing de jure and de facto inequalities that persist. To this end, the IPU will focus its actions on supporting parliaments to:

- Identify and address discrimination, particularly discriminatory laws, and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- Combat violence against women and girls
- Engage in gender-sensitive legal reform, and
- Build national strategies and frameworks to facilitate women's empowerment, including in the economic sphere.

In all of our action we will pay particular attention to engaging men and building partnerships between men and women for the promotion of equality and women's rights.

Objective 3: Protect and promote human rights

Parliaments and their members are uniquely placed to help translate international human rights norms into national realities. The IPU will continue to help parliaments carry out their responsibilities to protect the human rights of their members and, by providing members with information, knowledge and training, enable them to actively promote and protect the human rights of all persons.

Protect the human rights of MPs

We will continue to pursue the IPU's unique international role in promoting respect for MPs' human rights, and to advocate for redress in cases where those rights have been violated. We will step up action to enhance the involvement of relevant stakeholders—in particular, IPU Member Parliaments, IPU geopolitical groups, UN human rights monitoring mechanisms, and the human rights community at large—in the resolution of the cases brought to the attention of the IPU. We will increasingly use statistics and visual tools, and make our jurisprudence easily available, in order to draw attention to the serious risks faced by MPs across the world. Additional research and advocacy regarding some of the recurrent concerns in the IPU's casework should help promote understanding of underlying, cross-cutting issues and prevent new violations. The IPU will pay particular attention to how women parliamentarians are affected by human rights abuses.

Increase parliaments' contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights

The IPU will continue to support parliaments in fulfilling their role in the practical implementation of international human rights norms. We will mobilize parliaments to address current and pressing human rights challenges. We will step up our efforts to ensure that parliaments around the world become fully aware of the work of the UN Human Rights Council and are involved in its Universal Periodic Review. The IPU will raise parliamentary awareness of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as other key international human rights treaties. The role of parliaments in the implementation of these treaties and, where they have not been ratified, their ratification, will be the focus of this work. We will also help build parliamentary capacity to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The IPU will serve as a bridge between parliaments and the UN human rights machinery, and promote synergies that will strengthen action and improve efficacy. We will also collect and disseminate information on parliamentary mechanisms and processes that effectively support a robust national human rights agenda. Our *Human Rights Handbook for Parliamentarians* provides information and suggests action that can be taken with respect to the promotion and protection of human rights. We will continue to be guided by this Handbook and will further develop it as required.

Promote respect for international humanitarian law

The IPU will continue to engage parliaments, seeking their contribution and action in addressing major challenges to international humanitarian law. This will include support to ensure ratification and implementation of conventions pertaining to such law, including the Geneva Conventions and other agreements dealing with refugee protection and statelessness. In this we will work in close coordination with partners such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Objective 4: Contribute to peace building, conflict prevention and security

The IPU was founded on the premise of dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict. The role of parliaments in building peace and helping to prevent conflict—through dialogue and diplomacy—is crucial. Parliaments also play a pivotal role in restoring peace and fostering reconciliation in post-conflict situations. Strengthening security, including action to counter terrorism, is also fundamental to development and a major enabler of democracy. In this, too, parliaments play a central role—through legislation, budget allocation and the exercise of oversight to ensure implementation.

Ensure political reconciliation through dialogue and inclusiveness

The IPU plays a special role in countries emerging from conflict, helping develop their parliaments into robust and democratic institutions that can lead the way in healing national divisions. We encourage parliaments to do this work through dialogue and cooperation based on understanding and openness, a culture of tolerance and moderation, and highlighting the importance of political plurality and inclusiveness in decision-making. Parliaments are at the heart of reconciliation processes. MPs can lead the way in demonstrating how to work together across political, cultural and religious divides, and in engaging in constructive dialogue as a means of settling outstanding disputes. We support and will continue to support parliaments in post-conflict circumstances. We will do so by promoting consultation between MPs, and helping them—and parliaments as a whole—to contribute to national reconciliation by addressing the wounds of the past and collaborating on ways forward that will help build viable societies and create lasting peace.

Foster parliamentary diplomacy

A key part of the IPU's work is carried out through parliamentary diplomacy in some of the world's most intractable conflict areas. The IPU offers a privileged space for parliamentary diplomacy: Through IPU Assemblies we provide a neutral venue for members of parliament from different countries and political factions to exchange views and experiences, and discuss conflicts within and between countries. Making use of parliamentary diplomacy at the national or regional levels can help defuse tensions and resolve a conflict by peaceful means before it spirals out of control. The IPU is often called upon to leverage its good offices in addressing problematic issues that threaten the rule of law. We will continue to bring opposing sides to a conflict together under the IPU's auspices through our various formal and informal mechanisms.

Take action on counter-terrorism and disarmament

The IPU assists parliaments in dealing with various threats to security, including organized crime, small arms and light weapons, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. We also work to prevent violent extremism and to counter terrorism. In so doing, we are partnering with the United Nations and other actors to fill the implementation gap in international counter-terrorism instruments, and to meet non-proliferation and disarmament commitments. This includes full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540, as well as working towards achieving a nuclear weapons-free world. We will provide parliaments with the legislative tools and training required to transpose international commitments into national laws and oversee their implementation in line with human rights obligations. We will raise awareness among our Members of initiatives and instruments proposed as part of global efforts to combat terrorism. Through action on human rights and empowerment of women and youth, we will also seek to prevent terrorism, which is often fuelled by hatred, intolerance and discrimination.

The IPU will also focus on urban security as an emerging issue. All activities conducted under this objective will take into consideration United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security, and resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security.

Objective 5: Promote inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation

Since its inception, the IPU has served as the focal point for inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation. We seek to foster contacts, coordination and the exchange of experience among parliaments and parliamentarians of all countries. As noted by Speakers of Parliament at their World Conferences, the IPU is also called upon to cooperate closely with regional and other parliamentary organizations with a view to enhancing coherence and efficiency in global and interregional parliamentary cooperation.

Provide an effective forum for international political dialogue

The IPU will continue to consolidate its role as a unique global convener, bringing together MPs and other partners around issues and initiatives. IPU Assemblies serve to foster dialogue, understanding and exchange between MPs from all regions and of all political persuasions to identify good practices, and to help mobilize parliamentary action on issues of particular relevance for citizens, parliaments and the global community. We will strive to further improve the format, functioning and outcomes of our Assemblies, Standing Committees and other bodies. In close cooperation with Member Parliaments and partner organizations, greater effort will be made to improve the statutory reporting exercise and ensure effective follow-up of IPU decisions and resolutions.

Build greater coherence and effectiveness in global parliamentary cooperation

Parliamentary organizations and networks have proliferated over the past few decades. Our strategy will include seeking enhanced engagement and fostering synergies with and among these groups. The majority of parliamentary bodies are already institutionally related to the IPU as Associate Members and Permanent Observers, and we will continue to identify opportunities to reach out to and cooperate with as many of them as possible. We will work to build on the comparative advantages of the various parliamentary bodies and to identify areas where efforts can be pooled, thereby reducing duplication and enhancing coherence and effectiveness in global parliamentary cooperation.

Achieve universal membership

As the global organization of national parliaments, the IPU will redouble its efforts to achieve universal membership and enhance its relationship with the 45,000 parliamentarians around the world. Parliaments that are not yet IPU Members will actively be encouraged to join. Efforts will be made to reach out to and engage with the parliaments of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and to facilitate their sustainable participation in IPU activities.

Objective 6: Promote youth empowerment

In recent years, we have promoted youth participation as a key element of democracy and inclusive and efficient political processes. We will further promote youth participation in politics, and support the involvement of young parliamentarians and youth in general in decision-making. The IPU will also support parliaments in better responding to the needs of youth and integrating their perspectives into parliamentary work. Throughout this process, we will build on the IPU's successful experience and lessons learned in promoting gender equality in politics, as they can be applied to increasing youth involvement.

Ensure youth participation in politics and decision-making

Democracy requires the engagement of young women and men, as they are key to tackling the many challenges faced by societies—poverty, discrimination, growing inequalities, migration, climate change, conflict, and barriers to education and employment. Youth participation in politics promotes active citizenship and strengthens social responsibility. It offers innovation, creativity and new thinking.

We will continue to work to engage young people in the advancement of democracy through parliament—to enhance inclusiveness by boosting youth participation and to foster efficiency in parliamentary work by promoting young people's involvement in policymaking. Our efforts to engage youth will be centred on three key programmes: a campaign to increase youth participation in parliament; youth-led mechanisms to connect and empower young MPs; and an observatory of youth representation in parliaments.

Enhance integration of youth perspectives in parliament

Delivering on youth empowerment also requires a focus on more technical dimensions of parliamentary work. As a source of expertise on both the functioning of parliament and the participation of youth in parliament, the IPU will provide technical support to parliaments through tailored programmes aimed at enhancing the integration of youth perspectives and better responding to youth priorities. This support will be complemented by the development of guidelines on incorporating the viewpoints of youth — including through the use of ICTs and social media — as well as by regional capacity-building activities.

Objective 7: Mobilize parliaments around the global development agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will guide the work of the IPU in this area. The IPU will work to mainstream this Agenda in parliaments and to help enhance the capacities of parliaments to oversee the implementation of the goals contained therein. Our work will recognize the interrelatedness of the SDGs and focus on their advancement, individually and collectively. The IPU will also concentrate on specific goals that are aligned with our core work, and on goals that we have a comparative advantage in helping to implement as a result of our expertise and available tools. As action on climate change, disaster risk reduction and health is a critical precondition for achieving the SDGs across the globe, our work will also emphasize these areas. Furthermore, attention will be paid to development cooperation as a key component of the means of implementation for the SDGs.

Engage parliaments on SDGs implementation

Together with partners, the IPU will work to raise awareness about the SDGs among parliaments. We will provide a platform to help parliaments take action and exchange experiences and good practices, including those related to effective development cooperation and education for sustainable development. We will thereby make a tangible contribution to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and its overarching objectives:

- End poverty in all its forms and reduce inequalities everywhere
- Ensure the sustainability of the planet for future generations
- Promote social justice and ensure access to justice for all,
- Tackle climate change, and
- Promote full and productive employment and decent work for all.

A three-pronged approach will be adopted to involve the national, regional and international levels. This will include promoting the engagement of parliaments in global reviews of progress on the SDGs being conducted within the framework of the United Nations.

Take action on climate change and disaster risk reduction

In keeping with the IPU's *Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change*, we will work in partnership with other international organizations, research institutions, private sector organizations and civil society in mobilizing parliamentary action to combat climate change. The IPU will continue to call upon parliaments to provide a comprehensive legislative response to climate change and to support the implementation of disaster risk reduction. The primary objective is to ensure that IPU Member Parliaments effectively translate the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as Agenda 2030, into appropriate national legislation and budget allocations. Parliaments should also provide rigorous oversight of government action in areas that include environmental protection, nationally determined contributions to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, adaptation to climate change, transition to clean energy, and the creation of environment-friendly jobs. The IPU Secretariat has already embarked upon an initiative to become greener and is taking active measures to further reduce its carbon footprint. Moreover, we will continue to promote action by parliaments to reduce the environmental impact of their operations.

Ensure good health and well-being

The right to health is a basic human right, and health is fundamental to human security. Universal access to good quality health care is critical to ending extreme poverty, promoting development and transformative change, and achieving the SDGs. Across the globe, far too many people, including women, children and adolescents, still have little or no access to essential health services and education. They remain unable to realize their right to health and to attain their maximum potential as human beings; they cannot participate fully in society, making a significant contribution to the communities in which they live. For these reasons, the IPU will assist parliaments in completing the unfinished business of the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including combating HIV/AIDS and fully implementing the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. In cooperation with our partners—the World Health Organization (WHO); the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH); and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria—we will open avenues for strong parliamentary engagement to achieve a vision of health and universal coverage that leaves no-one behind.

Objective 8: Bridge the democracy gap in international relations

In an ever-more globalized and interdependent world, the United Nations remains the pillar of multilateral cooperation and plays a pivotal role in virtually all policy areas. The international commitments entered into by States have a direct impact on citizens and communities. This calls for parliaments and parliamentarians to play a critical role in bridging the gap between the global and local levels. The IPU pursues a strategy of mobilizing parliaments around the foremost issues facing the world. As part of this effort, we will continue to bring a parliamentary perspective to ongoing global initiatives and work with parliaments on the implementation of corresponding agreements. We will further enhance our strategic partnership with the United Nations and strengthen cooperation with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Bretton Woods institutions. In the process, we will seek to ensure strong parliamentary engagement in, oversight of and support for the work of the key institutions of global governance.

Ensure parliamentary engagement in and oversight of the work of the United Nations

The IPU will continue to facilitate interaction between parliamentarians and the United Nations community at both the national and international levels. We will help shape and promote parliamentary input to major global decision-making processes on the basis of policy recommendations emerging from IPU Assemblies and other formal meetings. We will partner with the United Nations through joint meetings and field programmes, and will work to build a more systematic interaction between UN field operations and national parliaments. We will encourage and support parliamentary action on the

implementation of major global commitments and help mainstream UN processes into the work of parliaments. Through its Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs and other mechanisms, the IPU will seek to enhance coordination and build close and harmonious relations with the UN system, drawing on each other's respective strengths. We will also work to enhance accountability of the UN system and its various operations, with a view to ensuring that the United Nations is more effective, transparent and inclusive, and that it better meets the needs and expectations of the people.

Strengthen parliamentary action in relation to the WTO and the international financial institutions

Trade is a key driver of globalization and can help support inclusive and sustainable growth. The IPU will continue working with the European Parliament, and in cooperation with national parliaments and other regional parliamentary assemblies, will provide an effective parliamentary dimension to the WTO. We will work to raise awareness of and enhance the capacity of parliaments to monitor WTO activities, engage in dialogue with WTO negotiators, exchange information and experiences, and exert greater parliamentary influence on discussions and negotiations within the WTO. We will also seek to enhance the role of parliaments and parliamentarians vis-à-vis the international financial and development institutions (in particular the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and OECD), and to increase their transparency and accountability.

ENABLERS

Enabling actions to deliver on strategic objectives

How does the IPU meet its strategic objectives? Our overall goal is to build strong democratic parliaments serving the people, and to identify and implement effective means to accomplish this—means that will maximize our impact and ensure that our outcomes transcend the individual parties and interests with which we are engaged. In the current environment, we believe we need to focus in all that we do on mainstreaming enabling actions in the following five areas.

Effective internal governance and oversight

The Secretariat will increase its service to the IPU's governing bodies in their functions of directing and overseeing the Organization's work. Specifically, it will provide support on matters related to financial management and risk assessment. The Secretariat will ensure that the IPU complies with the highest reporting and audit standards, as well as other international management best practices. In the interest of greater transparency, the Secretariat will provide more detailed explanations of its decisions and procedures. As well, mindful of its social responsibility, the Secretariat will further adapt its practices and working methods to encourage and demonstrate respect for the community and the environment.

Visibility, advocacy and communications

In a complex and crowded environment, evolving communication technologies have a profound impact on the sharing of information and the shaping of opinions, public behaviour and political action. The IPU's voice has never been so important. The success of our drive to build a democratic world where peace, security and development are a reality for everyone depends on our ability to promote our values and vision, and effective communication on how the IPU's work can and does deliver positive change for people is critically important to our mission. We will work to create stronger and more strategic communications that make full and innovative use of diverse communication platforms, tools and techniques; strengthen credibility; ensure knowledge-sharing; build expertise; and enhance engagement among Members.

Gender mainstreaming and a rights-based approach

The inclusion and mainstreaming of gender equality and human rights in the IPU's work will enhance effectiveness and delivery on key objectives. We have adopted a gender mainstreaming policy and strategy that we will continue to implement, including through the development of tools, training sessions and reforms. We have also developed a strategy outlining how to implement an approach that respects, protects and promotes human rights for all, which we will continue to pursue. Through the application of these strategies, we will enhance parliaments' and our own capacity to promote and ensure respect for gender equality and human rights. These core enablers are part and parcel of the *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments*, which we spearheaded and enforce.

A properly resourced and efficient Secretariat

The Secretariat is committed to identifying and securing adequate human and financial resources to implement this *IPU Strategy for 2017-2021*, and will draw on the support of IPU Members and partners to do so. It encourages systematic planning, performance monitoring and reporting. It will continue to promote parliamentary standards and norms. The Secretariat will carry out its functions with increasing efficiency, professionalism and accountability, and is committed to the ongoing professional development of its staff.

Partnerships

In carrying out its work, the IPU will engage and collaborate with a broad array of partners from the United Nations system, other international organizations that share its objectives, regional and other parliamentary organizations, civil society, academia, foundations and the private sector.