



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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136th IPU Assembly

Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1- 5 April 2017



Governing Council
Item 7

CL/200/7(b)-R.1
15 February 2017

Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(b) **Regional Seminar *Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals through a human rights perspective* (for Parliaments of the Pacific region)**

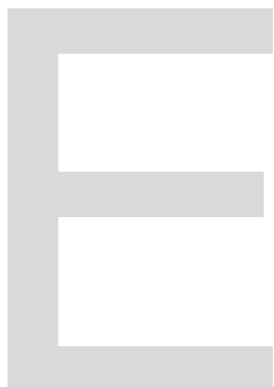
Nadi (Fiji), 16–18 November 2016

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and human rights are the two sides of the same coin: human rights are promoted by implementing the SDGs and vice versa. When the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted, it generated renewed momentum to push further on issues that are critical to people's well-being.

Under the auspices of the IPU, parliaments committed to translating the SDGs into enforceable domestic laws, holding governments to account and aligning budgets with national sustainable development plans. In order to deliver on this commitment, parliaments and decision-making processes must be strengthened so that they are fit for purpose.

A regional seminar was held in Nadi (Fiji), in the context of the links between parliaments, the SDGs and human rights. The event brought together 40 participants, including 20 parliamentarians from the Pacific region. The IPU organized the seminar with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the UN Development Programme, and the Parliament of Fiji. Specialists in the field shared their expertise and proposed ways in which the participants could contribute to implementing the Goals. The meeting focused on the SDGs that were particularly relevant to the Pacific region, such as those on climate change, gender equality and social equity. Participants also examined international human rights norms and mechanisms, particularly the UN Human Rights Council, to help ensure that the implementation of the SDGs fully respects human rights.

At the end of the seminar, participants formulated the recommendations set out below that would inspire people to take the wide-ranging action needed for the success of the SDGs.



#IPU136



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Implementing Sustainable Development Goals through a human rights perspective

Seminar for the Pacific parliaments organized jointly by the Parliament of Fiji and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

16 – 18 November 2016, Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi (Fiji)

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

*Presented by the Rapporteur of the Seminar
Mr. Lord Tuihaateiho, Member of Parliament, Tonga*

We, members of parliament from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu, met for a regional seminar entitled *Implementing sustainable development goals through a human rights perspective*. The seminar was jointly organized by the Parliament of Fiji and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in collaboration with OHCHR and UNDP. It was held from 16 to 18 November 2016 at Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi, Fiji.

This meeting was part of a series of IPU seminars designed to promote greater awareness among parliamentarians about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The series also encourages MPs to contribute towards implementing the SDGs. During the seminar, we exchanged enriching practices, which helped us to understand how our countries in the Pacific region were adapting the SDGs to national requirements. We learned from each other about how to formulate and execute national development plans and strategies that were designed to implement the SDGs through a human rights perspective.

Our three-day discussions focused on nine themes: the SDGs and why they matter to the region; the role of parliaments in implementing the SDGs; ensuring the right to a healthy and protected environment in order to mitigate climate change in the Pacific; women's rights and gender equality, and their impact on achieving the SDGs; the IPU's contribution to promoting human rights through the work of parliaments; social equity as a crucial factor for sustainable development; the role of parliaments in oversight and monitoring; examples of parliamentary involvement in the Universal periodic review; and what parliaments needed to take their next steps.

We welcome the IPU's efforts and commitment towards promoting greater awareness among parliamentarians about the SDGs and about how parliaments can contribute to implementing them.

We agree that the SDGs and human rights are both closely related to issues that affect our daily lives. Every time we act in our capacity as parliamentarians, we deal with those issues. As such, we recognize that the SDGs and human rights are two sides of the same coin. Implementing the SDGs contributes to fulfilling human rights, as human rights principles underpin all the Goals. Considering their importance and the strong links between them, we believe that the SDGs should not be left to governments alone. As members of the parliaments of the Pacific, we must and will play a key role in facilitating progress towards achieving the SDGs.

We believe that the people we represent should be at the centre of our concerns. It is therefore important and necessary to disseminate the outcome of our discussion and all information about the SDGs to the communities who have a stake in what we do, whose participation is strongly required in order to implement the Goals. We should mobilize our people to make a change in their lives.

We also discussed poverty and rapid population growth, both of which are viewed as being at the root of the problems that confront us. We considered the specific nature of poverty in the Pacific region, which is related to a lack of access to basic services and quality nutrition. We believe that this is not connected to the sorts of poverty that other regions experience. To address it efficiently, it is important to clearly identify and define poverty of this kind.

Considering the damaging impact of rapid population growth, we believe that we must urgently unite our efforts to encourage our population to procreate by choice rather than by chance.

We commend the directives of Pacific leaders on the SDGs. However, despite these efforts, more work is needed on some targets, which are crucially important for the Pacific region. Those targets relate to gender issues, climate change and disaster management, health and education, and water and sanitation.

We regret the slow progress towards gender equality. We believe that our cultures, which form part of our rich traditions, very often feed into stereotypes to which women fall victim. We believe that as parliamentarians, we should contribute to educating our people with a view to changing their attitudes about women. We agree that women's contributions are required in equal measure when efforts are made to promote their rights.

Considering what is required to implement the SDGs, we agree that adequate resources should be allocated to support the collection and use of data and to ensure their effective monitoring and reporting. We also recognize that, in order to implement the SDGs in the Pacific, additional resources are needed on top of current official development assistance and climate finance allocation.

We were informed of the work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal periodic review. We recognize the importance of this mechanism, which monitors human rights situations in terms of individual States' commitments to implementing international human rights norms. We believe that parliaments, as guardians of human rights, should contribute to the work of this UN human rights mechanism. Parliamentarians should not shy away from their obligation to ensure that their constituents' human rights are respected.

We made the recommendations below in view of our future action towards implementing the SDGs. They are by no means exhaustive. However, they provide a basis for our contribution.

- Parliamentarians should work across party lines to build **political will** and implement the SDGs in their own countries. Parliaments should take an active role in fostering dialogue among all stakeholders according to the principle of leaving no one behind. Dialogue between stakeholders including citizens, civil society and academia should create the necessary momentum for achieving the Goals. MPs should advocate for a national SDG coordination mechanism and seek a place in that mechanism when it is established.
- Parliaments should discharge their functions to help **translate the international SDGs into a national reality**. Each country should devise a national sustainable development strategy to design and support country-specific goals and targets. Parliaments should advocate for national sustainable development strategies. They should be developed in an inclusive manner, where key stakeholders are involved, including women' groups and organizations. These strategies should reflect national needs and inspire action at the local level where it matters most.
- The national development strategy should be **gender sensitive**. It should build on SDG 5 (ensuring gender equality and empowering all women and girls), as well as on existing commitments to gender equality expressed through the Beijing Platform for Action and the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). National strategies should include sex-disaggregated indicators and apply a gender lens to the implementation of all SDGs. Both male and female parliamentarians should advocate this approach.

- Parliaments should make sure that **legislation supports the implementation of the national sustainable development strategy**. Each parliament should devise a methodology to make laws compatible with sustainable development. The fact that the SDGs are closely interlinked should also be reflected in legislation.
- Parliaments should consider integrating the SDG agenda into established national strategies through **cooperation between the legislature and the executive**. This could involve working closely with ministries to shape and implement the national sustainable development strategy.
- Each parliament should find effective ways to **hold their government to account for the implementation of the national sustainable development strategy**. In doing so, parliaments should define frameworks for periodic monitoring of government action, including on gender mainstreaming. Parliamentary hearings and plenary reports should be used more effectively to oversee action and bring the SDGs to the attention of the public and the media, thereby encouraging accountability at all levels.
- **Budget allocations for the sustainable development strategy** will be critical to success. Parliaments should make sure that national commitments and sustainable development priorities are both gender-responsive and are duly reflected in the budget. This may require an entirely new approach to fiscal and tax policy, as well as incentives for more sustainable production and consumption.
- Considering the critical impact of climate change on the countries of the region, we call for **the creation of specific parliamentary bodies to oversee this issue**. Such bodies should aim to keep parliaments regularly informed about climate change management. Those bodies should provide data updates to allow legislation to be adapted and government action to be monitored. Such updates would also ensure good stakeholder coordination, which should include input from the executive, UN agencies, other international partners and civil society.
- In implementing the SDGs, it is important to stay up to date on what is happening and where the agenda is heading. Therefore, Parliaments should **be part of the international SDG network** by participating in organizations that provide support on the SDG agenda such as the IPU and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We call for initiatives to be coordinated between the parliaments of the Pacific and the IPU so as to achieve more efficient results.
- Parliamentarians of the Pacific region should be actively engaged at every point in the Universal periodic review, including by:
 - participating in the national consultation process during the preparation of the national report;
 - participating in the working group session;
 - identifying the State's position on the recommendations (a consultative role);
 - following up on the recommendations through parliamentary human rights committees and as members of inter-institutional structures;
 - participating in the preparation of the mid-term implementation report;
 - participating in the national consultation process for the next review.

We urge the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community and ensure follow-up through its programs and Assemblies. We also urge the IPU to continue to facilitate exchanges of good practice and experience among parliamentarians at all levels. This will help to inspire action and maximize the contribution of parliaments to implementing the SDGs.