



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# 136<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly

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## Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

### (i) Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of the Sub-Saharan Africa

Kampala (Uganda), 1-3 March 2017

The first Regional Seminar on the SDGs for African Parliaments was hosted by the Parliament of Uganda and the IPU in Kampala on 1–3 March 2017. The event brought together members of parliament from 18 countries. They discussed key issues for the sustainable development of the region, including SDG 16 (*peace, justice and effective institutions*), governance, health, climate change and resources for SDG implementation.

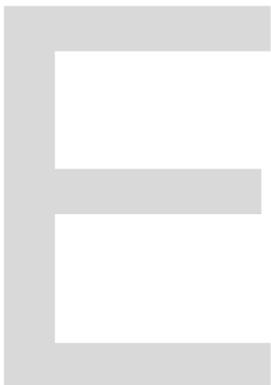
One of the conclusions of the Regional Seminar was that functional institutions, visionary leadership, and participatory governance mechanisms are key ingredients for the transformative agenda in Africa.

The participants adopted an outcome document. It highlighted the role of parliaments in implementing the SDGs and noted that fulfilling that role would require MPs to work across party lines, both to build political will and create parliamentary mechanisms. The document also called on MPs everywhere in Africa to maintain a dialogue with key stakeholders, including the executive, citizens and civil society. MPs were encouraged to engage in joint projects with parliaments from other countries so as to promote peace and stability.

Participants recognized the importance of achieving gender equality, both as an end in itself and because it would help achieve several SDGs. Young people were identified as another important group. They should be involved in national development plans, as the implementation of the SDGs would have a significant impact on their lives.

The outcome document called for climate change challenges to be addressed by transposing international agreements into national legislation. Environmental degradation is a problem throughout Africa. MPs therefore called for legislation that would provide incentives for behavioural change to improve matters.

Representatives of the IPU and UNDP presented the SDG self-assessment toolkit for parliaments. Participants were interested about learning to use the toolkit. They signed a poster of the cover produced by UNDP.



#IPU136

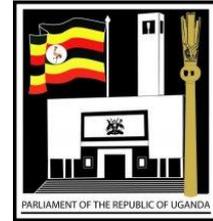


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## Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Sub-Saharan Africa

Kampala (Uganda) 1–3 March 2017

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and  
the Parliament of Uganda



### DRAFT OUTCOME DOCUMENT

We, members of parliament from Sub-Saharan Africa gathered in Kampala, Uganda, from 1-3 March 2017 for a Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The seminar was jointly organized by the Parliament of Uganda and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). We appreciated the technical and logistical support provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

We discussed how the SDGs and their targets could apply to our countries and the region and how we could advance its development. We placed special emphasis on the important role parliaments can play in ensuring effective implementation of the SDGs at the national level. The Seminar served as a forum for exchanging experiences and good practices. It benefited from the contribution of experts from the United Nations and civil society.

Our debates focused on five main themes: (1) the role of parliaments in achieving the SDGs; (2) effective governance as a critical element of sustainable development; (3) ensuring health and well-being for all; (4) tackling climate change; and (5) identifying and mobilizing national resources to implement the SDGs.

From the outset we recognized the critical importance of SDG 16 and the key role of democratic governance in the implementation of the SDGs. We welcomed the strong commitment by the IPU's Member Parliaments to implement the SDGs at the national level, as expressed in the Hanoi Declaration adopted by the 132<sup>nd</sup> IPU Assembly. We also congratulated the IPU and its Member Parliaments for their active engagement in following up on the Hanoi Declaration and mobilizing parliaments from the world over to implement the SDGs.

We also welcomed the launch of the IPU/UNDP SDG self-assessment toolkit for parliaments. The self-assessment will enable parliaments in both developed and developing countries to discuss issues, gather information and answer questions that will help them make an informed decision about the most suitable and effective way to engage in SDG implementation.

Our discussions turned to the following questions: What are the key elements of strong parliamentary action on the SDGs? How can parliaments in our region integrate the SDGs into their work? How can we, as parliamentarians, play a more active role in the implementation process, including assessing the impact of legislation and accompanying measures?

We proactively engaged in these issues and drew up the following strategies, actions and recommendations to advance parliamentary engagement with the SDGs in Africa:

1. We recognize that the SDGs represent a useful people-centred framework that can drive inclusive sustainable development in our societies. Parliamentary action on the SDGs is urgently needed and each parliament should adopt a motion on the SDGs to serve as its roadmap in this important engagement. Parliaments should fully discharge all their functions to help translate the global goals into their national reality and plans; their capacity needs to be continuously strengthened in this regard.

2. Good governance and democratic institutions are fundamental to sustainable development. They provide the foundation for just, peaceful and inclusive societies, as well as socially responsible and environmentally friendly development. Effective and open parliaments are key institutions of democracy that provide constitutional, regulatory and legal frameworks for enhanced, transparent and people-centred sustainable development.
3. Parliamentarians should work across party lines to build the political will to implement the SDGs in their countries and consider creating parliamentary mechanisms to spearhead work on the SDGs. Parliaments should have an active role in convening a dialogue with key stakeholders, including the executive, citizens and civil society, thereby creating the necessary momentum for the goals. They should advocate for a national coordination mechanism for the SDGs and seek their rightful place in its composition.
4. Parliaments should make sure that legislation supports implementation of the national sustainable development strategy. Each parliament should devise a methodology to make laws compatible with the SDGs. The fact that the SDGs are interlinked and not independent of each other should also be reflected in legislation.
5. Each parliament should find effective ways to hold government to account for the implementation of the SDGs and the national sustainable development strategy. In doing so, parliaments should define frameworks for periodical monitoring of government action. Parliamentary hearings, question times 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.
6. Budget allocations for the national sustainable development strategy will be critical to success. Parliaments should make sure that national commitments and sustainable development priorities are duly reflected in the budget and that they are gender-sensitive. This may require an entirely new approach to fiscal and tax policy, as well as incentives for more sustainable production and consumption.
7. As elected representative of the people, parliamentarians have a responsibility to make sure citizens are familiar with the national sustainable development strategy and are consulted regularly with regard to its implementation. In order to effectively engage with citizens, parliamentarians should develop clear, understandable and focused messages to ensure effective outreach and communication on the goals. They should also serve as champions of the agenda.
8. Enhancing gender equality and empowering women is critical to achieving a broad range of goals. The SDGs framework presents an opportunity to implement policy changes directed at tackling discrimination against girls and women, increasing the voice of women in making decisions at all levels in society and influencing the allocation of resources in a gender-sensitive manner, including on issues such as health and climate change.
9. Parliaments should recognize that the SDGs and their intended impact will shape the lives of different generations, especially Africa's growing youth population, estimated to be over 60 per cent of the region's total population. For this reason, they should emphasise reaching out to them, seeking their input into national development plans and promoting their role in implementation. Parliamentarians should also put in place policies and legislation that raise the awareness of adolescents about their reproductive health and rights.
10. In the specific case of health and well-being, parliaments should leverage their functions to advocate for lines in the national budget to be earmarked for strengthening fragile health systems and providing essential, quality and affordable health services, overseeing implementation of national health plans and strategies, and seeing to it that effective health expenditure is in place. Mobilization of domestic resources will be instrumental in tackling infectious diseases, especially the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, as well as the growing prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

11. Climate change represents an inevitable and urgent global challenge with long-term implications for human and ecological systems. Carbon footprint reduction is crucial to fighting climate change in Africa and across the globe. African parliaments should elevate the issue to the top of their national agendas. They should address climate change by transposing international agreements into national legislation and support it through the establishment of appropriate budget allocation and robust oversight of government performance. Special emphasis should be placed on creating enabling legal environments for the transfer of technologies and patent protection to promote transition to renewable energy.
12. In the specific case of environmental degradation, which is increasingly prevalent in Africa, parliaments should explore ways to develop legislation to incentivize, rather than compel, changes in behaviour, habits and attitudes that have a negative impact on the environment. Special attention needs to be paid to the fact that environmental degradation has a particularly negative impact on the health of women, children and the elderly, most of whom are small subsistence farmers or the urban poor.
13. Parliaments should promote and advocate for strong regional and international inter-parliamentary cooperation on the SDGs, and in particular the development of joint projects between countries as a precondition for peace, stability and prosperity. Parliamentary action is also required to support regional and international cooperation to facilitate technology transfers, trade, investment and capacity building.
14. All parliaments should make use of the IPU/UNDP self-assessment toolkit as a useful way to identify how existing structures can be used to advance engagement on the SDGs and whether new ones structures should be put in place to overcome silos.
15. As they take action on climate change and the environment, all parliaments should ensure legislation on the protection of endangered wildlife species, both marine and on land, and encourage sustained action to hold governments to account in this regard.

In order to inspire action on the SDGs, we will bring this Outcome Document to the attention of our colleagues in parliament through all possible channels. We also undertake to bring the document to the attention of other relevant stakeholders.

We request the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community at the 136<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly in Dhaka. We urge the IPU to promote parliamentary engagement with the SDGs and continue to work with the United Nations and other relevant partners to channel information and scientific evidence that will support effective action and impact.