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FOLLOW-UP OF THE 2011 ISTANBUL PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

7 October 2013 (11 a.m. - 1 p.m.)
Room A, CCV Annexe, CICG)

Concept note

The 2011 Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) constitutes the most recent global commitment to support the special development needs of the least developed countries (LDCs) for the decade ending in 2020. The goal is to halve the number of LDCs (49) by focusing policy on eight priority areas in both developed and developing countries.

The IPU made a strong contribution to the preparatory process of the conference (“parliamentary track”) and as a result, several passages of the IPoA and accompanying Political Declaration acknowledge the role of parliaments in the implementation of all commitments, particularly in the area of governance.

From the moment the IPoA was adopted, the focus of development partners turned to implementation. At the United Nations, an Inter-Agency Working Group in which IPU participates is meeting regularly to coordinate action. The UN system as a whole is supporting LDC governments while initiating national and regional dialogues to discuss issues of particular interests to the LDCs. Beginning next year, the United Nations will start work towards a mid-term review of the IPoA due in 2015-2016. A building block of that review will be national progress reports to be compiled by governments in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

For its part, the IPU has placed follow-up of the IPoA in its Strategy for 2012-2017. A joint project proposal between the IPU and the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS) was finalized in the wake of the conference, setting out a five-year plan of activities at both the national and international levels. Among other things, the joint project envisaged the establishment of parliamentary focal points to help mainstream the IPoA throughout the work of parliaments.

In spite of the large-scale follow-up mechanism put in place to support the implementation of the IPoA, some major obstacles remain at both the political and operational levels. Challenges persist in ensuring that the priorities of the LDCs are adequately reflected and mainstreamed across the spectrum of policy areas. Most parliaments, including in the LDCs, have not been able to put in place any structure or process to facilitate the implementation of the IPoA in a systematic way and as part of the overall national development plan or donor country assistance policy. Another key challenge is to improve donor commitments, which continue to be weak in respect of financial and technical support for parliamentary engagement with the implementation of the IPoA. This is illustrated by the fact that the above-mentioned joint project proposal remains unfunded. Meanwhile, an expanding global agenda, including through a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the post-2015 period, risks diverting attention away from the critical needs of the LDCs and their Programme of Action.

Objectives

After taking stock of the challenges faced by the LDCs, the session will discuss how to translate the level of commitment reflected in the IPoA into effective follow-up action by all development partners. Special attention will be paid to the question of how to support the mainstreaming of the IPoA into the work of parliaments in LDCs and development partner countries. To this end, the discussion will also reflect on the findings of focus groups conducted in a few LDC parliaments in the lead-up to the session and in close cooperation with UNDP country offices.

Participants will take part in a critical discussion centred on the following aspects:

1. Review of UN country offices' role in the implementation of the IPoA in conjunction with national parliaments: mandates; reciprocal focal points; and overall approach.
2. Mainstreaming LDCs' priorities in the post-2015 development agenda and SDG process: the challenge of competing international agendas; divergent priorities among development actors; and capacity constraints in parliaments and governments alike.
3. Institutional challenges in mainstreaming the IPoA throughout the work of parliament: overcoming silo committee structures; and problems related to setting up dedicated committees or caucuses.
4. Parliamentary participation in national progress reviews: identification of effective approaches and relevant support of UN country offices.

The outcome of the discussion will help inform future IPU activities in support of the IPoA both on its own and in cooperation with the UN system. This will likely include helping a small group of parliaments actively engage in the national progress assessments that will begin in 2014 in view of the 2015-2016 mid-term global review.

Format and participation

The session will consist of short (five- minute) presentations providing a critical analysis of the above-mentioned four points, followed by an interactive discussion with MPs. Parliamentarians from both donor and LDC countries are invited to take an active part. The room set-up, in boardroom/roundtable style, will facilitate direct interaction to help generate a focused discussion.

Panellists will include:

- Mr. Gyan Chandra Acharya, UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States;
- Ms. Anne Makinda, Speaker of Parliament of Tanzania;
- Ms. Fatoumata Diendéré Diallo, Second Vice President of the National Assembly of Burkina Faso;
- Mr. Pascal Karorero, UNDP Resident Coordinator in Burkina Faso;
- Ambassador Jean-Marie Ehouzou, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations Office at Geneva.