



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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# World e-Parliament Conference 2016

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Co-organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the  
Chamber of Deputies of Chile

#eParliament



**Opening remarks**  
**Martin Chungong**  
**Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**  
**Valparaiso, 28 June 2016**

Mr. Speaker,  
Mr. Farias,  
Distinguished delegates,

This is the seventh time that we convene as an international community of parliamentarians and experts to share latest progress in the use of technology in parliament. What a distance we have travelled since that first e-parliament conference in Geneva in 2007! Those of you who have followed the successive conferences organized by the IPU, the European Parliament, the parliaments of the United States of America, South Africa and the Pan-African Parliament, Italy and the Republic of Korea have no doubt been struck by the energy and imagination that parliaments are deploying to make themselves more open and transparent and more accessible to citizens. We have come a long way. But the journey towards making effective use of technology in parliament is only beginning.

It is fitting that this World e-Parliament Conference takes place in Latin America for the first time, the region that has perhaps demonstrated the greatest desire to adapt parliament to the digital era. I believe that it is particularly appropriate that we are at the Chilean parliament, which has consistently shown its political commitment to technological innovation. I would like to extend my personal thanks to the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, to Mr. Farias and to the whole of the organizing committee, for the way in which they have embraced this opportunity. I think that you will be able to learn this week of some of the great work that has been taking place in Chile.

My thanks also go to our long-standing partners at the National Democratic Institute and the United Nations Development Programme for their support to the conference, and of course to the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, with which the IPU initiated its work on e-parliament through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

Distinguished delegates,

When we talk of e-parliament, we are talking of no less than the future of parliaments. Technological developments in society pose huge challenges to all public administrations, but they also provide huge opportunities. I realize that I am preaching to the converted here. You are the parliamentarians, the managers and the experts who are leading the change in your own parliaments, and who are the most eager to embrace the opportunities of the digital era. Allow me then to share a few thoughts that place our work here in a slightly wider context.

In September last year the world's leaders gathered at the United Nations to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This transformative agenda contains a set of 17 goals and more than 160 targets to achieve a fairer, safer and better world for all by 2030. It is a remarkable political commitment in its breadth and ambition, but also because of the inclusive process leading to the adoption of the goals that took into account the views of different countries and regions.

The voice of parliaments was heard strongly throughout the preparatory debates. One of the very new elements was the recognition from the international community that sustainable development requires strong institutions: ones that are accountable, transparent and effective, ones that are participative and inclusive in their decision-making processes. These are the fundamental conditions to ensure that decisions are taken in the best interests of the people, and that no-one is left behind. They are also the core values of democratic parliaments.

The Sustainable Development Agenda, and international processes in general, can often seem far removed from the day-to-day concerns of parliaments and the priorities of elected representatives. But they are not. There are no more important issues for parliaments than ensuring that every child can have a high-quality education; that everyone has access to healthcare and employment opportunities. These are issues that citizens and voters care deeply about, and for which they reward or punish governments. And now our governments have made a formal commitment to specific targets. It is the role of parliaments to help them achieve these objectives, and to monitor, question and challenge the progress they make towards the goals.

This is the work that parliaments are doing every day, as they study amendments and vote on laws, carry out inquiries and hold public hearings, scrutinize budget estimates and question officials about expenditures and results. This is why parliaments are so fundamental to the Sustainable Development Agenda. This is why everyone – all of us, and every citizen around the world – has an interest in ensuring that parliaments become stronger, better and in closer contact with the communities they represent.

“Democracy 2030” is the theme that IPU has chosen for this year’s International Day of Democracy on 15 September, that we are encouraging every parliament to celebrate. It brings together three related groups of questions. What will our institutions look like in 2030; how will they adapt to the digital era and the changing world around them? Will parliaments be able to build connections with young people or will they be left out of formal politics altogether? And how can we foster the democratic principles that are needed to achieve the development goals to which the world has agreed?

It is of course a challenge for parliaments to keep pace with the rate of change in technology. But changes are underfoot in parliaments as well. New tools allow citizens to see exactly what is being debated in parliament, and how their representatives are voting. Will this help to increase public trust? New experiments are taking place in the legislative process, to find easier ways for people to give their opinion. Will we see a move towards co-creation of the law between citizens and representatives? More data than ever before is available in the public domain, which radically increases the ability of citizens to scrutinize and question public authorities. Will we see new models of citizen oversight emerge, and if so, what will the place of parliament be? Better access to disaggregated data will make it possible to evaluate more accurately the impact of public policy on women and men. Will this finally help to reduce and put an end to gender-based discriminations?

Our aim is to foster conversation in each country about the future of parliament in the digital era. To encourage people to say what kind of parliament they want. And to help them to shape the future with their energy and ideas.

Your work is taking parliament into new territories. A movement towards more open, accessible and accountable parliaments is underway. There is only one direction of change, the question is the pace at which parliaments are able, and willing, to travel.

Of course I can imagine that there must at times be huge frustrations and seemingly insolvable problems that you face in your work. My firm belief is that by working together, with all the stakeholders in our own societies, and within the international community of parliaments, that we can always find a solution.

I would now like to close my remarks by formally launching the 2016 World e-Parliament Report. The report is the product of contributions from 88 national parliaments and more than 30 civil society organizations. It is also the result of the work of a very dedicated team, and I will leave it to the author of the report, Andy Williamson, to present the main findings and conclusions in a few minutes. This fourth edition in the series provides a baseline to track progress in the use of technology in parliaments. It provides a measure of how far we have come as a community, but also how far we still

have to go, and the absolute imperative to see that no parliaments are left behind. Because if they are, the consequences will be felt most keenly by the citizens that they represent. It is our shared responsibility as a community to make sure that all parliaments are able to evolve and adapt to citizens' expectations in this digital era, and to deliver on the fundamental goals that have been agreed in the 2030 development agenda.

Thank you.