

Global capacity-building initiative for parliaments on sustainable development

Inaugural Conference Paris 22-23 April 2005



IPU-UNITAR



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY
UNION

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Foreword

Promoting sustainable development and ensuring that globalization is beneficial to all are part of the main challenges of the twenty-first century: they call for the adoption of new attitudes and demand profound structural change. Achieving the objectives of sustainable development and ensuring good governance at the national and world levels will require that parliamentarians play a greater role.

The role played by parliamentarians in international negotiations related to sustainable development is still marginal. Yet it is parliaments that eventually will be responsible for transposing into national law the agreements negotiated by the executive branches at the regional and international levels. It is also they that, as institutions representative of the people, will be responsible for ensuring that such agreements take into consideration citizens' expectations. Indeed, better parliamentary follow-up of the negotiation process for international agreements would ensure more effective policies, greater transparency of government action and a stronger national consensus. Parliamentarians could thus act more effectively in support of sustainable development.

To meet this challenge and the needs of parliaments, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) have drawn up the Capacity-building Initiative on Sustainable Development, the aim of which is to allow parliamentarians to perfect their knowledge of sustainable development and to become acquainted with international negotiation processes and institutions in this field. Ultimately, this should allow parliamentarians more actively to follow international negotiations and to better address the question of transposing international agreements into national law, thus ensuring a better representation of citizens' interests in international and national debates.

The inaugural conference of this initiative took place at the French Senate in Paris on 22 and 23 April 2005, and brought together some 200 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from nearly 70 countries. During this event, the parliamentarians discussed opportunities and obstacles encountered in drafting and following up on policies and other measures related to sustainable development. The discussions centred on three key problems of sustainable development: water, climate change and energy, and trade for sustainable development.

The two days of work underscored the enormous need of parliaments, regardless of the political context, to have expertise in sustainable development. Support in this field is necessary if they are effectively to carry out their functions. The discussions also made it possible to define the priorities of the training programme to be drawn up jointly by UNITAR and the IPU.

On behalf of UNITAR and the IPU, we express our thanks to all the partner organizations and associations that were kind enough to work with us on this conference, and to the experts for their invaluable intellectual contributions to the discussions. We would also like to thank the French Government, which partially financed the conference, and last but not least, to pay tribute to the French Senate, which by hosting this event once again demonstrated its generous hospitality.



Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General of the IPU



Marcel A. Boisard
Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations
Executive Director of UNITAR

Opening speeches

Robert DEL PICCHIA,
Senator, Vice-President of the Foreign Affairs
Committee, France

Permit me, on behalf of Christian Poncelet, the President of the French Senate, to open the inaugural conference of the Global Capacity-Building Initiative for Parliaments on Sustainable Development.

I am all the more pleased to carry out this task because I believe that today's conference illustrates in an exemplary manner three principles that are very dear both to me personally and to the French Senate.

First of all, I deeply believe in the importance, the efficiency and the legitimacy of parliamentary diplomacy. We parliamentarians, the peoples' representatives, have a duty to directly contribute to international relations in order to make heard a voice other than that of governments and to bring greater democracy to the global system.

In the view of some, sustainable development, as with any international issue, should be addressed only through intergovernmental negotiations in the forums of international institutions. They believe it is a matter of international politics, forever beyond the scope of the citizens whom we all here represent. However, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development of 1992 states that "Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level." This is, in my view, common sense, but it also imposes duties on us.

The second principle is that, faced with the multiplication of inter-parliamentary initiatives, we must choose criteria for participation that will avoid diluting and thus the weakening our message. We at the French Senate have thus decided to adopt the criteria of mentoring, as exemplified in the IPU's initiative. For that reason, we are particularly pleased to host this joint initiative of the IPU and UNITAR, whose action in favour of local authorities I also wish to commend.

This brings me to the third principle that motivates us here today: the fact that French senators, as the constitutional representatives of the French local authorities, are, by nature and by vocation, the premier French environmental activists, since there can be no appropriate land use policy without constant attention being paid to the environment and sustainable development.

This demonstrates how timely our meeting is, and how much I welcome the fact that the IPU and UNITAR were able to gather such a prestigious group to discuss this issue. This meeting truly honours the French Senate.

This meeting is, moreover, very topical for the French people. Firstly, because our Constitution was modified on 1 March 2005 to include a reference to the Charter on the Environment and Sustainable Development: sustainable development is henceforth a constitutional principle that must underpin the actions of France at the national, European and international levels. But also because sustainable development is now one of the European Union's objectives, included in Article I-3, paragraph 3 of the treaty establishing the European Constitution, which reads as follows: "The Union shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment. It shall promote scientific and technological advance." This article is very thorough and important.

These principles having been laid out, they must be applied in practice so as to induce both economic actors and citizens to adopt a more environmentally-friendly attitude in everyday life. It involves caring for the quality of the air, noise reduction, the protection of nature and the countryside, water treatment and waste management. It has a strong social dimension, since it is often the less advantaged who face the most harmful effects of a failure to address such issues.

But sustainable development and respect for the principles that were laid out also require global awareness, and this is where we have a leading role to play. The Earth's atmosphere is a common good: global warming is not confined by borders, and it would be very naïve to imagine that it could be thwarted without concerted action by all.

To quote Martin Luther King: "We must learn to live together as brothers, or we will die together as fools." Sustainable development is a universal challenge. It will be the common work of all, or it will not happen; it will be our shared work, or it will not happen.

Relevant actions must involve the good will of all and a common concern for one's fellow beings. They require a democratization of global institutions that will allow for the participation of all those involved. Sustainable development is a "process of change", according to the Brundtland Report, and it is thus subject to permanent, collective arbitration.

Sustainable development is no fashion statement. It is a challenge - a challenge to selfishness, to meanness, to narrow-mindedness. It can only prevail with the approval of all, an approval that is today far from sure. But we must act today; tomorrow, it will be too late.

To face this emergency requires public awareness: it is the honour and the duty of parliamentarians in every country to assume responsibility for raising such awareness, and to effectively do so.

Dear colleagues, let us not flinch in our endeavour, and never forget that we are not bequeathing this planet to our children; we are merely borrowing it from them.

Nathalie KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET,
Member of the French National Assembly,
President of the Study Group on Health and Environment

Training in sustainable development is an important objective, and must be part of an ambitious sustainable development policy. It means weighing up the stakes, working with a long-term perspective and remaining humble, as one strives to rediscover ancient balances, to create new ones and to take on the considerable task of inventing new modes of production and consumption. In France, we are so strongly convinced, both at the National Assembly and at the Senate, of the importance of this goal, that we have included the subject of the environment in the French Constitution, and environmental education in particular. We recently adopted, in a joint session of the parliament, Article 8 of the Charter on the Environment and Sustainable Development, which stipulates that environmental education is now a constitutional requirement. Since September 2004, environmental education has thus been integrated into French academic curricula, not as a new subject but as a part of all courses.

Training in sustainable development is thus an important objective, and training parliamentarians in sustainable development is even more so. It means building their capacities and interests and strengthening their proactive outlook as they confront a wide-ranging task. This is the role of

UNITAR, whose work I commend. It might also mean making up for shortcomings, since for example French parliamentarians are still relatively weak as far as scientific training is concerned. It is also about bridging the gap between parliamentarians and civil society in matters of sustainable development. Indeed, a study published in France in 2003 showed that parliamentarians lagged behind in matters of sustainable development. This is probably due to the fact that we often come from the sphere of locally elected officials, and thus are very aware of local policy issues such as water and waste management, but much less so when it comes to global issues such as global warming or biodiversity loss. We need to bridge this gap and make up for lost time.

Finding topics that citizens can actively get involved in may thus be an important objective of the new work we are beginning today. Policies are often too distant from the general public. It is necessary to adopt policies that allow everyone to work in favour of sustainable development. I personally can think of two such policies: the first one consists in emphasizing the link between the environment and health. That link is ever more clearly apparent through the numerous attacks on our health that a degraded environment provokes, but remains a poorly addressed issue that needs to be further explored in order to respond to the concerns of the population. The second policy consists in making use of consumption patterns. Citizens can become activist consumers. This choice is becoming more prevalent in our society. Such a choice involves a degree of awareness and education of the consumer as a citizen.

Training parliamentarians in sustainable development also means fighting a certain feeling of not controlling one's own destiny. Sustainable development involves, generally speaking, the opportunity to renew political visions, to work together on new, more cross-cutting policies with a strong emphasis on solidarity, and to do away with outdated modes of organization. Sustainable development also offers a way of looking at the fragility of our world and responding to problems that undermine our societies. It allows for shared responses to anxieties about globalisation, by pinpointing its positive aspects. Sustainable development can be seen as the globalization of positive energies, or as a demonstration that the globalization process can be regulated, since it produces its own antidote: the energy we all are ready to use to make it beneficial.

To conclude, allow me to cite Article 1 of the Charter on the Environment and Sustainable

Development, that became part of our national Constitution a month ago, which stipulates that "everyone has the right to live in a healthy, balanced environment". This is no less than a new human right, that we now wish to disseminate throughout the world. We hope this event will contribute to that aim.

Marcel BOISARD,
United Nations Assistant Secretary-General,
Executive Director of UNITAR

Parliamentarians have a key role to play in the setting up of a more democratic, efficient and responsible global governance system.

The days when foreign policy was the exclusive domain of the executive branch are fading away. More than ever, international relations are shaping domestic policies, and external relations are strongly influenced by national socio-economic interests.

Throughout the world, parliamentarians are growing aware of this evolution. However, if they wish to preserve their prerogatives and to secure the well-being of their citizens, they must play a more active role in the management of international affairs.

Issues such as poverty, the proliferation of pandemics and environmental degradation, and the promotion of human rights transcend national borders. This causes the decisional processes to shift towards the international arena, and creates new challenges for legislators.

The way international relations are organized is undergoing a profound change. New protagonists are claiming a role in negotiations that until now have been strictly reserved for intergovernmental relations. International law is once again reflecting its origins as a *jus gentium*. Parliamentarians are of course foremost among these new protagonists. Numerous recent reports underline this fact. I would cite, for instance, the findings of the following:

- the Cardoso Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations Relations with Civil Society;
- the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalization ;
- the Helsinki Process on Globalisation and Democracy;
- the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change;
- the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment;

- the United Nations Secretary-General's recent proposal entitled *In larger freedom: Development, security and human rights for all*.

Indeed, it is neither absurd nor an exaggeration to say that humanity stands today at a crossroads. Today's threats to our security are interdependent and closely interrelated. The core principle of collective security, that is, the fact that a threat to one is a threat to all, is more pertinent and more topical than ever. The huge imbalances in wealth distribution and participatory power have become morally unacceptable and politically unsustainable. The ability of the planet's ecosystems to cover the needs of future generations can no longer be taken for granted and the inability of the international community to manage issues such as environmental degradation, poverty, illiteracy, armed conflicts and human rights abuses has implications on everyone's life, everywhere.

Parliamentarians – as the people's elected representatives – bear an obvious responsibility in establishing and implementing relevant solutions. Legislative bodies must no longer limit themselves to conveying local worries into national policies. Parliamentarians must today participate more actively in the integration of national concerns into international policies and make sure that those policies are applied efficiently and coherently. Two years ago, the United Nations Secretary-General declared in his speech before the Bolivian Congress, "while parliamentarians were at one time the link between the local and national levels, today you also are the meeting point of local and global interests."

In this regard, it is particularly significant that we are meeting in the Senate of France, a State whose two chambers convened in a joint session recently adopted a Charter on the Environment and Sustainable Development that is now part of the national Constitution. I should mention that Ms. Kosciusko-Morizet, a member of the National Assembly who honours us with her participation in our work, was the Rapporteur for that constitutional law bill.

UNITAR strives to respond to the training and capacity-building needs of national and regional executive branches. The mandate that the United Nations General Assembly assigned to UNITAR when it was set up in 1965 was to "enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations in achieving the Organisation's major objectives, in particular the maintenance of peace and security and the promotion of economic and social development" through training and research.

In recent years, UNITAR's training activities have expanded significantly in two interrelated fields: international affairs management and economic and social development. Some 150 different programmes, seminars and workshops are designed and conducted each year throughout the world, benefiting close to 8,000 participants, mainly from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. We are, however, convinced that without greater sensitization and mobilization of parliamentarians, local authorities and civil society, our efforts will be less effective. Furthermore, the United Nations Secretary-General, relying on various works by Panels of Eminent Persons, has repeatedly called for the reinforcement and development of relations between the people's elected representatives and intergovernmental organizations. That is why UNITAR, through its Decentralized Cooperation Programme, has sought to work with the IPU. We have jointly designed a sensitization programme that we are pleased to launch here with you. We do not wish to move forward without your opinion and support. The current challenges facing humanity are considerable. But solutions are within our reach. As stated by the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his report entitled *In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*,

“Five years into the new millennium, we have it in our power to pass on to our children a brighter inheritance than that bequeathed to any previous generation. We can halve global poverty and halt the spread of major known diseases in the next 10 years. We can reduce the prevalence of violent conflict and terrorism. We can increase respect for human dignity in every land. And we can forge a set of updated international institutions to help humanity achieve these noble goals. If we act boldly — and if we act together — we can make people everywhere more secure, more prosperous and better able to enjoy their fundamental human rights.”

Parliamentarians – elected representatives and spokespersons of the people – have a crucial role to play in the realization of those objectives. Many of the world's experts and leaders advocate for greater participation of parliamentarians in the management of the challenges currently facing humanity, both at the national and international levels. The challenge faced by parliamentarians is to respond to those calls with the common vision and collective action that are necessary to build a safer, fairer and more sustainable future, and to

prepare the brighter inheritance that their fellow citizens deserve. I feel certain that this conference will be the fruitful debut of a promising new endeavour.

I could not conclude without thanking our partner, the IPU, represented here by its Secretary General, Anders B. Johnsson. We have established cordial and, I hope, lasting relations while preparing this event. Our gratitude also goes, of course, to the President and the members of the French Senate, who have provided this room in the magnificent Luxembourg Palace. I ask Senator del Piccha to convey our warmest thanks to his peers. The *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* accepted to join in this initiative even in its preparatory phase. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided a generous financial contribution. Lastly, we also thank all of you participants, some of whom have travelled extensively to join us at this inaugural session. Those marks of collaboration, interest and trust represent so many guarantees of the success of our work.

Anders B. JOHNSON,
Secretary General of the IPU

It is a great pleasure and honour to speak to you today at the opening session of the conference launching the Global Capacity-Building Initiative for Parliaments on Sustainable Development. It is an even greater pleasure as this conference is taking place in the French Senate, the higher chamber of the French parliament. I should like to thank this institution, which takes its role as founding member of the IPU very seriously and has been actively involved in the Union's activities since 1889. It is a pleasure for me to launch this initiative with the Senate as a major partner.

The IPU, the oldest international political institution, was created near the end of the last century to promote peace and international cooperation through parliamentary action. We cannot fail to note that parliaments have been playing an eminent role in the management of public affairs in recent years, thanks to a general trend towards democratization and good governance. This is perfectly in line with the ideal that the IPU has set for itself, namely that the parliaments of sovereign States should play their constitutional role fully. Parliaments certainly contribute to the better management of public affairs through their legislative activity, but also through their functions of oversight of government activities, budget distribution and allocation and finally, through their representation of citizens. As

the principal representative institution of the State, parliament must represent the interests of all sectors of society, take those interests into account in the policies it adopts and ensure that those policies are effectively implemented. In the final analysis, it is obvious that the stronger parliaments are, the more efficient and crucial a role they play in the management of public affairs, both at the national and international level. This is the concrete ambition of the Union: to help its Members to fully occupy their rightful place in both the national and the international arenas.

Generally speaking, parliaments are ever more frequently called upon in the normal course of their work to deal with major international issues, including environmental management, and more generally, sustainable development. In order to ensure effective and useful action, parliamentarians must be sensitized to the great issues at stake in those matters.

The conference that begins today responds to that need. Helping parliaments to inform themselves and to build their capacities is an integral part of the IPU's mandate. The Union is happy to be able to count on numerous national and international partners to accomplish that mission. Today, we express satisfaction at our partnership with the French Senate, but also with one of our privileged partners within the United Nations family: UNITAR.

The partnership we have set up with that organization enables us today to submit to you the present Capacity-Building Initiative for Parliaments on Sustainable Development. Once again, I would like to reiterate to UNITAR, represented here by its Executive Director, the IPU's commitment to pursuing and strengthening this cooperation with the global parliamentary community.

The IPU-UNITAR partnership stems from the observation that international environmental law,

and more generally sustainable development, have been relatively obscure issues among institutions that do not specialize in them. However, the increasing importance of these issues has resulted in the expansion of the relevant literature and in the number of legal texts. It was thus crucial to provide a forum where parliaments could become informed about and participate in the definition of parliamentary priorities in these matters. We have favoured a participative process, and the launch of the conference for which we are gathered here today must enable a more precise definition of priorities and activities by the participants and beneficiaries themselves. Those priorities will be taken into account in the national and subregional workshops that are planned as part of our joint project.

The contribution of the IPU to this project is intended as a way of helping to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As you all know, these objectives are aimed *inter alia* at ensuring sustainable development and setting up a global partnership for development. The workshops planned in the context of the IPU-UNITAR initiative will build on this vision and aim at enabling parliaments and parliamentarians to become more deeply involved in achieving these goals.

I should not end without mentioning my satisfaction at the high level of participation in this conference. The fact that more than 70 parliaments are represented is quite encouraging and can be taken as a sign that this capacity-building initiative will be a great success. I thank you for your commitment, and hope that this conference's work will meet your expectations. I wish you excellent discussions for the next two days.

Key substantive challenges: Implementing the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Millennium Development Goals

Introductory statements of the experts presenting the concept of sustainable development

Nitin DESAI,
Former Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations

I have for a long time been involved in sustainable development concerns through participation in several summits that dealt with this topic, and it is a great pleasure for me to see so many parliamentarians gathered to discuss this subject. It is a sign of the political relevance of this topic.

I. - Sustainable development, a bridge between environment and growth

Sustainable development plays an increasing role at the national and international levels. It is a cross-sectional concept that was defined by the Brundtland Commission. In this Commission, some people considered the preservation of nature as the main objective, while others were convinced it was growth and development. Sustainable development bridges the notions of environment and growth, two notions which are intimately related. In practice, we are far from achieving sustainable development. Thus, I am pleased to see so many parliamentarians at this conference today.

II. - Challenges to be met

The first challenge of the twenty-first century is to raise society's awareness of the fact that we are reaching the limits of the planet's ability to sustain our needs. Thus, competition for environmental space is bound to occur. Sustainable development requires that rich people adapt their living standard so as to allow poor people to live better. Such a rebalancing is necessary at the international level and within individual countries themselves. It will involve changes in the way of life and production in rich countries as well as in poor ones. A plan for the environment is necessary at the global and local levels to measure our ecological footprint.

Several studies have clearly shown that the needs of the rich countries in respect of the environment by far exceed the ability of the planet to meet them. It is thus necessary to make some effort in the field of energy efficiency. We all already have the means to do so, as Mr. Von Weizsäcker will explain to you during his presentation. Mr. Von Weizsäcker has worked extensively on this topic and has proved that it is possible to strike a new

balance in our energy consumption and adapt it to the availability of resources.

This rebalancing between use and resources constitutes one of the major challenges of sustainable development. However, if it is important to look at the energy consumption of developed countries, it is also necessary to analyze modes of production and energy use in poor countries, notably in the rural areas of developing countries. Indeed, certain traditional modes of production are not sustainable. For them too, a rebalancing is necessary.

What are the implications of this new equilibrium for our societies? The first is poverty eradication. We committed ourselves during the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, and more recently through the Millennium Development Goals, to reduce extreme poverty by half by 2015. However, if we really want to reach this goal, we should not see it as a favor we are doing, but as a necessity that forces us to modify our consumption habits and resource use both in rich countries and in poor ones. Some people think that the market can bring about development. However, the market does not always favour sustainable development, and often contributes to increasing inequalities. It is necessary to keep in mind the imperatives of sustainable development.

1. The urban explosion

The urban explosion is another challenge to sustainable development. Many cities have already reached their breaking point, and the situation will get worse with population growth. Here too, we must deal with the fundamental element of sustainable development, namely the relationship between rich and poor people within cities.

2. Globalization

Another challenge is the one created by globalization of trade, finance and culture. Because of this globalization it is today much easier to delocalize environmental risks. Moreover, environmental or economic risks and the risk of contagion are also increased. Globalization of culture involves a risk of a homogenization of the way of life, causing a loss of cultural diversity and an impoverishment of cultures.

However, globalization also offers opportunities that we must seize. It creates a more rational and

logical allocation of labour at the global level and, when managed appropriately, can allow for an accelerated transfer of sustainable technology. In order to take advantage of globalization and avoid its disadvantages, it is necessary to control liberalization, to institutionalize risk management and to ensure a fair distribution of goods.

3. "Sectoral" challenges

Sustainable development comprises sectoral challenges. The first one is access to water. Sound water management is a real challenge, but it is also an opportunity, as water issues can be a source of sustainable policy in rural areas.

In the field of climate, the situation is not good either, as the consequences of climate change seem more grave than had previously been foreseen. Only a global and concerted approach can solve the problem. Biodiversity and the preservation of cultural diversity are two main challenges that will require global solutions.

III. – The role of parliaments

Parliaments are the most legitimate institutions to represent and defend the common interest. Parliamentarians have an essential role to play in integrating sustainable development into policies and making society and decision makers more responsible.

They must be at the forefront of sustainable development.

The absence of sustainable development is often the consequence of a problem in defining responsibilities. Laws are required in order to provide a framework for and generate sustainable development. The role of legislators is thus fundamental. Parliament is also the best institution to relay the aspirations of citizens. In the new world panorama, parliaments should play a greater role. It is thus necessary to foster relations between parliamentarians and also between parliaments. Sustainable development is the challenge of the twenty-first century. We all have a role to play - parliamentarians, civil servants and decision makers.

Tariq BANURI,
Director of the Stockholm Environment
Institute - Asia Centre

I shall approach sustainable development not from the angle of its weaknesses and its shortcomings, but rather from the angle of its strengths and advantages. My presentation will draw upon a study we made in the framework of the Johannesburg Summit. During this study, we

interviewed about a hundred environmental workers and activists about the meaning they gave to sustainable development. We gathered a thousand stories and anecdotes and selected a hundred of them. I will present some of them to you today.

These are the questions we asked the workers and activists: What is sustainable development? What are the characteristics of sustainable development in practice? How is it possible for decision makers, workers, students and activists to make sustainable development happen?

I. - What are the prerequisites for sustainable development?

The first lesson that we drew from our study is the need to improve listening capacity with regard to sustainable development. Indeed, the ability to listen is often lacking. As parliamentarians, you are used to listening to people, but that is not the case for bureaucrats and managers, who often must be reminded of the importance of listening.

The second lesson we drew is that the intergovernmental political process that produced many agreements and plans of action in the field of sustainable development at the global level is reaching its limits. It is now time to put these agreements into force. That was precisely the objective that was set in Johannesburg.

The third fundamental lesson was to notice that a true civic will existed among citizens. It is this civic will that will generate a political will and will act as a catalyst for sustainable development.

What also struck us is the variety of ways to envisage sustainable development. Some people address sustainable development as an end in itself, while others address it as an ongoing process. Our own reflection started from "the beginning" and was intended to answer the following questions: Where does sustainable development start? Who acts in favour of sustainable development in concrete terms? In order to answer these questions, let me briefly present to you some of the stories we gathered during our study. In Dakar, for example, the mayor decided to form small think tanks on sustainable development in slum areas instead of imposing policies from above. In Thailand and in India, the creation of assemblies of the poor and the emergence of certain social movements testify to the existence of a civic will that pushes forward reform. In the Philippines, the implementation by the society of an Agenda 21 at the local level attests to the existence of this civic will.

These examples show that civil society plays a major role in the implementation of reforms in

favour of sustainable development. In the different examples I have cited, there was a gap between the legislation and the requirements of sustainable development, and that gap was bridged by civil society. It is thus necessary to create spaces for those who defend reforms with regard to sustainable development so that initiatives can be launched.

II. - Identifying sustainable development

We learned several lessons on this subject. First of all, we noted that it is essential for initiatives to have a firm base in the community. Let me illustrate this by an example: in a region of Rajasthan, in India, the river had dried out.

The inhabitants thus decided to build several small dams with the support of the entire community, which united around this initiative. Thanks to this support, this project became one of the most popular initiatives in favour of sustainable development. This example demonstrates that it is critical to have citizen participation to be able to move forward with sustainable development.

During our study, we realized that the most successful initiatives were those which made rational use of economic and ecological resources. We also learned that to be effective, these initiatives had to be "adaptable" so as to be reproduced in different places. Let me give you an example of a non-governmental organization (NGO) specialized in energy, that was created because of the energy shortage. Members of this NGO realized that problems did not emerge due to a lack of energy, but rather owing to poor use of energy. They created a programme combining energy conservation, forestry resources management and the struggle against poverty. This initiative worked so well that it was replicated by a number of organizations.

III. – How to achieve sustainable development?

Our study taught us that behind every project or initiative in the field of sustainable development,

there is a person, a human being is trying to fill a void. When it comes to sustainable development, we cannot ignore the fundamental and central role of the individual.

Secondly, sustainable development involves significant investments in research and innovation. Thirdly, it also involves institutionalizing projects. Indeed, during our study we met numerous people who had institutionalized their initiatives to ensure that they would have a lasting effect. We learned that the projects that are successful are those that include large-scale communication efforts. Our study also demonstrated the need to invest in partnerships. Indeed, partnership between actors, civil society, parliamentarians, technical staff, policymakers, activists, and students is essential for the implementation of sustainable development initiatives. Sustainable development will progress if we create an environment conducive to it. We must talk about sustainable development, promote it and make it known. We do not hear enough about sustainable development, especially in education systems. An effort should also be made in this field in the use of analogy. In Nepal for example, an initiative in the field of forestry was adapted to the energy sector. Imitation is a necessary and extremely useful process in the field of sustainable development. Actors can often replicate past initiatives by innovating and adapting them. Innovation and imitation are very important.

I hope I have given you some examples of fruitful initiatives in the field of sustainable development so that you can speak about them in turn and put them into practice. We need a commitment from you now, because we have to take action immediately.

Parliamentary perspectives and insight in advancing the sustainability agenda

Presentations by European, African, Asian and South American members of parliament of the different regional approaches to sustainable development

Tom SPENCER,
Former British Member of the European Parliament, Executive Director of the European Centre for Public Affairs

As members of parliament, our challenge is to give evidence of simplicity and boldness. Simplicity because we have the duty to translate the complex questions of sustainable development into understandable terms for everyone. Boldness because boldness is indispensable to any political action.

I. - Role of national parliament

In his time, Edmund Burke, conservative representative of the city of Bristol, already raised the issue of concern for the protection of the environment, a concern we inherit from our parents. We have the duty to pass on in good condition this "present" which has been bequeathed to us by our parents. It is in this framework that our action as members of parliament must take place. Edmund Burke told the inhabitants of the city of Bristol that he was their representative, not their delegate. As such, he had to give them his sincere opinions. Sometimes I wish that as members of parliament we could be more honest and could show more clarity in respect of our voters. Indeed, the mission of parliamentarians is almost sacred; it is a true vocation. This role is more than honourable, and it has a particular impact in the field of sustainable development.

We try today to know better the topics of vital interest to parliamentarians. What are key skills of parliamentarians? Voting the budgets and ratifying treaties. However, considering the crisis that humanity now faces, it is necessary for us to go beyond these aspects, and to be more responsible. In my country, the House of Commons has a decisive role which is for us a source of pride. I am in favour of an increased role for the national parliament, which must be able to set priorities according to its own aspirations.

II. – What lessons can be drawn from the experience of the European Parliament?

The European Parliament is different from national parliaments, as it has no government at its side or over it. At the global level too, there is no single

government for the whole world, and the institutional structure is extremely complex.

As a consequence, the elaboration of international treaties takes a lot of time and sometimes exceeds the life expectancy of a parliament. A certain degree of continuity is needed so that parliaments can follow the questions which are treated at the global level.

Secondly, the European Parliament had to innovate because it had to work in the absence of a constitutional structure. I think that the members of parliament here today can play the same role at the global level. It will require from us a certain creativity and confidence in ourselves. And this is one of the reasons to gather us here today: to offer mutual support, to strengthen our confidence and to allow us to become more daring.

Let us now return to the parliament's competences. Parliaments should not only ratify treaties, but should also be active in the treaties' drafting and negotiation processes. Our role must be respected, and we must be careful not to be marginalized when we participate in such debates. Members of parliament who participate in such debates must be accompanied by experts, and must passionately defend their positions.

III. - Parliamentarians' role at the global level

Members of parliament should also be able to exercise increased oversight of international institutions (such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO)). I have worked on the network of members of parliament for the World Bank, and we have discussed the possibility of formulating written questions, with the obligation for the Bank to provide an answer within six weeks. Needless to say, the ability to ask questions is important. If you ask the right question and manage to worry the government, you can prompt change. Why not create a world assembly of members of parliament within the World Bank? The agreement of such a body could be required for all the major decisions taken by the institution. With such an assembly, the election of Mr. Wolfowitz would perhaps have been more difficult.

Parliamentarians would have had a greater impact in terms of multilateralism if they had been better integrated in the decision-making process. Why not systematically integrate the point of view of members of parliament into the conclusions of any multilateral agreement? Finally, relations between members of parliament and NGOs must improve in order to ensure better complementarity. These are a few ideas that would make it possible to increase the credibility and legitimacy of members of parliament at the world level. Personally, I am convinced of the usefulness of the United Nations, and I think that the presence of members of parliament within it would be completely desirable. The presence of members of parliament could among other things be used as a counterweight to the ambassadors of certain countries. It would make it possible to go beyond certain sometimes archaic models.

IV. - Ways to strengthen the role of parliamentarians

In the afternoon, we will consider the training and support that members of parliament require in order to achieve the missions I have just explained. The first means is an exchange of best practices. The accent must also be put on training in the principles of world governance. Members of parliament should have a better understanding of the functioning of the various institutions so that they can participate in international processes. This would allow them to better understand their role in the context of globalization.

I hope that we will find the means to strengthen the role of members of parliament through existing networks and new inter-parliamentary bodies. That would make it possible to muster the enthusiasm and passion of all those who are sensitive to sustainable development. Such exchanges do not replace cooperation between parliaments, but are essential to dealing with the challenges of sustainable development.

In conclusion, allow me to talk about Jared Diamond's book entitled *Collapse*, which deals with societies that choose to fail when faced with an environmental threat. The author considers that such a phenomenon arises when the political dialogue no longer exists, when institutions withdraw unto themselves and when there is no more understanding of the general interest.

We are still not there, but I am afraid we are not very far from it. I hope that in 500 years, historians will be interested in the way our society saved itself, and I am convinced that members of

parliament can contribute in a significant way to saving humanity.

Marie-Noëlle LIENEMANN, Member of the European Parliament, France

The European Parliament has always been active in the field of sustainable development. We currently have a committee on the environment, a committee on north-south relations and a committee on social services. It is no doubt in relation to social questions that our skills are weakest and our concerns are insufficient. Indeed, in recent years the efforts of our Union have turned to north-south development less than in the past, probably because of the European Union's enlargement eastwards. This reorientation makes it imperative for us to take up the challenges of the twenty-first century. We are all confronted with this reality. The Spanish leader Felipe González summarized it very well when he said "The world is our planet". However, we have not succeeded in establishing a true democracy on our planet where the voice of the people can be heard and globalization is in sync with the ambitions of the majority. We thus have a duty as members of parliament, as representatives of these peoples, because we embody a part of these peoples, to bring to the fore of world consciousness a greater sense of responsibility. As members of parliament, we must act in favour of a new kind of global governance.

I. – The indispensable implementation of the Kyoto Protocol

At the Rio Summit, specialists sounded the alarm and raised global consciousness. In Johannesburg, the alarm was raised a notch, but action was still not taken. And the problem is still very much there. Because we have sounded the alarm and have shown a failure to act in concrete terms, a certain idea of collective powerlessness has taken hold. Our ability to act has been called into question, and we risk seeing a nightmare scenario whereby the energies mobilized today all come to naught.

We therefore must choose an approach different from sounding alarms. We must show that we are capable of making progress. The European Parliament is convinced that the best method is to show the way with success, and not to point to the dangers of inaction. As representatives of European countries, we must set an example in sustainable development. We must implement the Kyoto Protocol. If that agreement, which has been adopted and ratified, is not implemented, it will be useless to imagine any further progress. It is

therefore imperative that the Kyoto Protocol be a success. The European Union must effect major changes in its policy, its economic practices and its research investment. The European Parliament has made this one of its priorities.

China and the United States of America have not acceded to the Kyoto Protocol. In both, the question of economic competitiveness arises, and the Kyoto Protocol does indeed involve demands that weigh upon the economy. But parliaments should be strong enough to make hard choices. We will not succeed in implementing the Kyoto Protocol unless the wealthiest and most developed countries make the most effort.

II. The duty to set the example

We must assume our international responsibilities while at the same time paving the way in sustainable development at the national level, both environmentally and socially. I would plead in favour of politicizing sustainable development, not with the aim of getting lost in political squabbles, but rather to ensure that this new concept will be more than just smoke and mirrors. In Johannesburg I heard the major international enterprises addressing the need to take sustainable development into consideration, but I know that these same companies will stop any pretence of generosity on this subject as soon as they have no more profits to gain from it. Thus we cannot simply trust the private sector. NGOs, as useful as their work may be, are also unable themselves of implementing the necessary policies. That is where we come in.

Among our environmental priorities there is also the question of water. If we in Europe cannot resolve problems in this field, with all our wealth, then who can? Here too we have the duty to set an example, but experience has shown that we also have a great deal to learn from experiences in areas where resources are more scarce. We have seen that prudent resource management is often more effective there than elsewhere. The development experiences of the entire world must be given their due.

Among our priorities in the social field, there is gender equality. We believe that this equality is a major element of the good governance of sustainable development. In consumption patterns, in ways of conceptualising development, everything indicates that no other form of equality can be ensured if there is not equality between the

sexes. There has never been an example where equality made progress while gender equality did not. Therefore, we believe that it is crucial to make equality between men and women a strategic facet of sustainable development in this twenty-first century. This is far from being the case, and we can see some worrisome reversals in this field in some of our countries.

III. The need to redefine international trade regulations

We must set the example, but we must also be the protagonists of a new kind of global governance in respect of sustainable development. We at the European Parliament have been calling for the establishment of a world environment organization to ensure that social and environmental standards are given greater consideration in international agreements. It is legitimate that certain States should fear that social standards, in particular those of the International Labour Organization (ILO), and environmental standards might be used by the countries of the North as a pretext for protectionism. But on the other hand, everything indicates that if we do not together develop social and environmental regulations, they will be imposed by the market, resulting in environmental degradation and an increase in inequality in society. We have thus called for the establishment of a world environment organization, and for a hierarchy of standards to be adopted within the WTO. We consider that the rules of free competition alone cannot organize international relations. A balance must be struck between free competition, the respect of international environment conventions and ILO standards. The question of the hierarchy of standards must be raised systematically in European bodies in order to contribute to sustainable development.

We must not content ourselves with the adoption of standards and agreements. We must also provide international structures such as the United Nations and its specialized agencies with the specific resources and programmes required so that they can effectively fight poverty, implement the Kyoto Protocol and improve living standards. That is why we in the European Parliament are calling for the establishment of an international tax for development, the exact shape of which is still under debate. Such a tax would make it possible to regulate the economy so that it serves the general interest, and sustainable development.

Sam Iet SEK,
Senator, Cambodian Senate

The aim of my presentation is not to speak about sustainable development at the world level, as that is for the experts to do. I will concentrate solely on the prospects for sustainable development in Cambodia, while at the same time acknowledging the planetary scope of this subject. There is still much to be done for our sustainable development projects. As part of its agenda for sustainable development, Cambodia has put in place a poverty reduction programme which respects the environment and the country's cultural heritage.

The Government has mobilized efforts to create conditions that are conducive to the economic and industrial development of the country, which was decimated by 20 years of war. The agricultural sector absorbs 80 per cent of the active work force of our country. It has a very large potential for sustainable development through poverty reduction efforts. The service sector too is quite large. Tourism occupies part of the labour force in the cultural centres and beach areas, but it is a sector that still must be developed. Cambodia is counting on this "smoke-free" sector to contribute to its sustainable development.

For a long time, Cambodia benefited from most favoured nation status with the United States. Since that status was rescinded, the country has seen its industry decline, in particular in the textile sector, which has brought the positive effects of sustainable development to a halt. I call upon the European countries to take up where the United States left off, and to facilitate relocation to our country, which has a skilled workforce for light industry. We should be able to diversify our exports while welcoming more industries. In respect of electric energy, while Cambodia has a large potential for hydroelectric generation, it is still in a poor position. Technical studies have shown that investments in this field would be particularly profitable in Cambodia. The French Government, through the French Development Agency, has already begun fostering such investment. We should emphasize, however, that in the future the main field for sustainable development in Cambodia will be the food and agriculture sector.

Parliamentarians in Cambodia can play a major role in terms of general policy planning when they adopt the country's finance bill. The parliament's debates make it possible for the Government to orient its programmes. Furthermore, the parliament can oversee the implementation of the policies that

are thus adopted. As senators, we have a responsibility to work to mediate and conciliate at the national level. Internationally too we have an important role to play; and I am pleased to have been able to carry out some such work at this conference here today.

Ali Abdul BAHARI,
Member of the National Assembly, Kenya

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded to a parliamentarian from my country, Mrs. Wangari Maathai. She would certainly be in her place with us today, especially as she has always fought for the environment and for sustainable development. If she has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, it is clearly because she has made our country aware of sustainable development. She has personally carried out a great deal of work in the forests of the Congo.

Within Kenya, various reforms have been carried out in recent years in support of sustainable development, in particular in the field of education. We are seeking to develop an environmental conscience among our citizenry. A law was adopted in 1999 establishing a government commission to monitor environmental matters. We are also in the process of drawing up a constitution which will include a full chapter on the environment and sustainable development.

Mr. Desai has ably linked sustainable development with combating poverty. Cooperation between the first and third worlds is indeed required worldwide, and that applies to each and every one of our countries. We must seek to ensure a more equitable distribution of wealth. Kenya is a major coffee producer, but in fact our country is specialized in tasks with very little added value; those involving significant added value remain the prerogative of the most developed countries. A new division of labour is required to make possible balanced development. The environment is another concern for our country. I have personally witnessed certain rivers running dry in Kenya. That shows the speed with which changes affecting the environment can take place within a lifetime, and it demonstrates the full importance of the tasks we are facing.

Carlos WILLIAM DE SOUZA,
Member of the House of Representatives, Brazil

For Brazil, sustainable development is essential. Brazil has 30 per cent of the world's freshwater

resources and the largest virgin forest in the world, in the Amazon. Brazilian parliamentarians have drawn up a sustainable development programme to settle the complex environmental problems of the day. We in Brazil have a great deal of experience with environmental programmes, which serve as examples for many other countries. We have had a national environmental policy since 1921. To cite an example, our Constitution contains an article devoted to the environment as well as several provisions establishing training programmes in this field. We are also perfecting laws to protect our country's flora, fauna and forests. For instance, we have adopted a law against environmental crime which provides sanctions and fines in the event of infractions. We have also adopted other measures to protect the environment, and hope to set up institutions to ensure respect for them. We have included provisions for solid waste treatment programmes in a bill that will soon be adopted.

Progress in sustainable development is only possible if we develop economic instruments to ensure that market forces support environmentally friendly practices. Water resource management is a particularly important field. Brazil has considerable environmental resources, and the country is advanced in the field of sustainable development. Our country is often criticized for the destruction of the Amazonian rainforest, but we

have taken many steps to protect it. Brazilian legislation is at the cutting edge, and that reflects the fact that we are aware of the considerable wealth of our resources.

Jorge PINHERO,
Member of the House of Representatives, Brazil

While Brazilian legislation is advanced, the executive branch is often at pains to enforce it. Our country's institutions do not have the means with which to do it. We have, however, stepped up our efforts to fight deforestation. Yet we lack resources, in particular in terms of staff and financing. We compensate for our weaknesses in financial resources by making efforts to train populations in the forest areas. On the other hand, we have considerable water resources. Yet we are doing everything possible to raise the awareness of citizens of the need to preserve this resource by limiting its use.

One of the problems that Brazil is facing on the legislative level is how to ensure that rules are coherent at the local, regional and national levels. It is for parliamentarians to improve this coherence in order to ensure real effectiveness. Lastly, we support the establishment of a tax system to finance environmental protection measures.

Sustainable development, the Millennium Development Goals and parliamentarians: Challenges, roles and opportunities, with a concrete focus on three key issues

Reports of the working groups

REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON WATER

Rapporteur of the working group: Aref BATAYNEH, Senator, Jordan

During the afternoon session, three working groups were created to discuss the main challenges facing parliamentarians in three specific areas: water, climate change and energy, and trade for sustainable development.

Group 1 was set up to consider the issue of water and to think broadly about the challenges, roles and opportunities facing parliamentarians in this field.

I. KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FACING PARLIAMENTARIANS IN THE WATER SECTOR

The moderator identified, based on the discussions, the following issues and challenges as relevant to parliamentarians:

- There is a need to better understand the linkages between water and other sectors such as energy, climate change, agriculture, health and biodiversity. There is also a need to deepen understanding of the concept of ecosystem services;
- The question arises of how to provide water for people while ensuring that ecosystems receive enough water to be able to continue providing ecosystem services. Access to water is increasingly regarded as a basic human right, and parliamentarians could help to promote this concept and entrench it as a constitutional right;
- As regards the issue of integrated water resources management, a key challenge is whether the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) 2005 integrated water resources planning target will in fact be met. As well, it is critical that governance be improved in the water sector if indeed integrated water resources management is to become the norm;
- As regards the link between water and food, the thirteenth session of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD-13) emphasized the need to use efficient water technologies and to share such technologies. As well, farmers should be trained in ecologically sound agriculture and in efficient water use, and agriculture and aquaculture should be implemented with increased focus on the poor;
- The proportion of people living under water stress will increase from 34 per cent in 1992 to 53 per cent in 2005, yet official development assistance (ODA) levels are not rising sufficiently to meet the demand;
- Water represents the “oil and gas” resource of the future. Therefore, how can parliamentarians of wealthy countries work to improve global water access, especially for the least developed countries (LDCs). If water is indeed to be considered as a global public good, then questions arise as to who will provide access to that good, and how increased financing can be mobilized to ensure access for all;
- There is a need for a global fund for promoting technology related to sustainable water use and management. Education and public awareness also need to be stepped up. Public awareness is critical, and the burden lies on educational institutions, since parliaments are not equipped to address the public awareness challenge;
- Parliaments in developing countries are faced with a wide range of constraints, since democratic institutions are not as well developed there as they are in the West. Therefore, the influence of parliaments in the developing world is relatively weak, especially as regards the promotion of sustainable development issues.

II. POTENTIAL ROLES FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ADDRESSING WATER ISSUES

Parliamentarians highlighted the following roles and obstacles:

- Given the increasing role of the private sector in the delivery of water resources, it is important that the position of the public authorities be strengthened to ensure that water resource policies benefit the poor;
- Parliamentarians must play a higher-profile role in holding their governments accountable for providing the necessary levels of social spending, as well as calling upon donor governments to honour ODA commitments;
- Parliamentarians should play a key role in elaborating what types of instruments might be needed at the national level to promote the concept of the human right to water and to promote the concept of water as a global public good;
- At the international level, parliamentarians should address how best to share experiences in the elaboration of the human right to water and in the advancement of the public good approach to water. That right must also reflect real economic and environmental costs;
- Parliamentarians must be better engaged in the various processes involved in the delivery of water resources and must address how best to improve access to water;
- Parliamentarians should play a role in ensuring that the necessary resources are mobilized to ensure access to water for the poor. At the same time, the right technology choices must be made in accordance with local needs and special considerations. The technology access question is an important issue which prevents local communities from ensuring adequate delivery of water resources, and parliamentarians must play a more active role in advancing the appropriate response to the technology challenge.

III. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENHANCE THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS?

The moderator, based on the debates, identified the following ideas to foster parliamentarians' action and engagement:

- An ongoing platform is needed to ensure the exchange of experiences in promoting sustainable water use. This might build upon the Global Capacity-Building Initiative;
 - The Global Capacity-Building Initiative should develop seven regional groups of parliamentarians around the world to assess what individual countries need in terms of financial and technical resources and then identify key resources that must be mobilized;
 - Parliamentarians need improved access to technical and scientific knowledge on the water issue in order more effectively to discharge their duties as legislators. This is a clear need that the Global Capacity-Building Initiative can help to address;
 - Parliamentarians also need better education, training and awareness-raising on the issue of water and especially on the related human rights, ecological and security dimensions;
 - Parliamentarians need resources to enhance their involvement in the negotiation of multilateral environmental agreements, especially those dealing with water issues. Their involvement is critical for ensuring the accountability of national governments and for deepening their own understanding of the complexities of multilateral negotiations;
 - Resources are needed to support parliamentarians in developing framework laws on water access and delivery, as well as the sharing of the resources between different countries, at both the bilateral and regional levels.
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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Rapporteur of the working group: Farooq AMJAD MEER, Senator, Pakistan

During the afternoon session, three working groups were created to discuss the main challenges facing parliamentarians in three specific areas: water, climate change and energy, and trade for sustainable development.

Group 2 was set up to consider the issue of climate change and energy, and to think broadly about the challenges, roles and opportunities facing parliamentarians in this field.

I. KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

The moderator identified, based on the discussions, the following issues and challenges as relevant to parliamentarians:

- There are complex linkages/synergies/conflicts between energy, water, agriculture, and the conventions related to climate change, biodiversity and desertification;
- Renewable energy systems should be encouraged to the maximum extent in developing countries, since, in addition to being climate-friendly, they have positive impacts on other environmental concerns, as well as on such aspects as employment and industrial development;
- Climate change has negative impacts on poor countries and peoples, while its causes rest with people in the industrialized North;
- A number of adverse effects that can be connected with climate change are already visible in many countries: coral bleaching (Pacific islands), disappearance of rivers due to local climatic changes (Kenya), reduced precipitation resulting in soil degradation (Sahel countries), etc.;
- There is an urgent need to implement existing agreements - for example the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD);
- What should be the role of nuclear energy - particularly in developing countries?

II. POTENTIAL ROLES FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS IN THE FIELD OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENERGY

During the debates, parliamentarians highlighted the following roles:

- Include environmental issues in educational curricula;
- Set the standards which industrial units must meet to undertake production;
- Create awareness and disseminate information to the general public and different stakeholders;
- Ensure implementation of laws;
- Create economic incentives to make people adopt environmentally friendly policies;
- Strengthen international environmental governance;
- Quantify the benefits of action, not just the costs;
- Make the public understand that the costs of inaction today will be much higher than the costs of action;
- Adopt the following motto: "Take action within your country, clean up your own house (country). If you do that well, it may have an impact on others";
- Learn lessons from best practices adopted by other countries and put them into use according to local needs;
- Cooperate with different parliaments of the same region and make use of existing parliamentary networks;
- Parliamentarians should use simple language (stories) instead of scientific terminology in communicating with the public, and encourage scientists to do the same;
- More emphasis should be given to renewable energies, especially in rural areas;
- There is a possibility for the developing countries - with financial and technical support from the industrialized countries - to invest in climate-friendly technologies, and even to ensure that all the

new technologies will be low- or no-carbon technologies. This, however, will not happen by itself, and parliamentarians can/should work for this goal.

III. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENHANCE THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS?

The moderator, based on the debates, ascertained the following ideas to foster parliamentarians' action and engagement:

- There should be interaction between the different committees of the parliament and likewise between the different committees within the region and the subregion. This will ensure an integrated approach to development;
 - Coordination between different stakeholders is needed, especially with civil society and academia;
 - More power should rest with the legislature than with the executive. Therefore, capacity-building and information exchange is needed;
 - There is a need to create regional inter-parliamentary groups;
 - Parliamentarians should be part of delegations involved in negotiations;
 - Engage parliamentarians from countries representing different positions on selected issues, through direct communication;
 - Develop better relations with civil society and the United Nations system;
 - Informed parliamentarians should form networks to become national and then global pressure groups;
 - Improve parliamentary oversight of international organizations;
 - Parliamentarians should insist on the adoption of national strategies with clear targets and ensure consistent follow-up;
 - Traditional parliamentary tools should be used, such as inquiries, the setting up of commissions, and the asking of questions on the floor of the parliament;
 - Environmental questions should be considered in view of economic and social questions.
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REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TRADE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT

Rapporteur of the working group: Lord BRENNAN, United Kingdom

During the afternoon session, three working groups were created to discuss the main challenges facing parliamentarians in three specific areas: water, climate change and energy, and trade for sustainable development.

Group 3 was set up to consider the issue of trade for sustainable development and to think broadly about the challenges, roles and opportunities facing parliamentarians in this field. More specifically, this working group explored the role of parliamentarians in ensuring that international trade supports their countries' national economic and social development and is consistent with the sound management of natural resources and the environment.

I. KEY ISSUES OF TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The moderator identified, based on the discussions, the following issues as relevant to parliamentarians:

- How can countries strengthen their economies, improve their exports and earn foreign exchange, while alleviating poverty, managing their natural resources, and conserving the environment?
- The WSSD Plan of Implementation refers to trade as a means of implementing sustainable development. Trade can also contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Done poorly, however, liberalization may undermine these goals;
- Trade liberalization must consequently be undertaken in the right sectors, at the right pace, and supported by the right rules and institutions at the domestic and international levels. Parliamentarians play a role in securing these.

II. POTENTIAL ROLES FOR PARLIAMENTARIANS IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TRADE

During the debates, parliamentarians highlighted the following roles:

- Parliamentarians have potential roles to play in identifying the goals of trade policy, helping to evaluate the impacts of past and potential future trade policies, and sequencing trade liberalization;
- Where trade-offs are required, they can help to balance the need for growth, competitiveness and trade against environmental, social and other concerns, and can identify opportunities for synergies;
- Parliamentarians can review government negotiating agendas, and ensure appropriate rules are implemented and institutions created to manage liberalization. These include policies to share wealth, address labour issues, and manage natural resources;
- They can also can also promote dialogue with civil society and business and weigh the interests of different groups, including future generations.

III. CHALLENGES TO PARLIAMENTARIANS IN ENHANCING THE CONTRIBUTION OF TRADE

During the discussions, parliamentarians identified the following challenges:

- Independent analysis. Parliamentarians need to undertake their own analysis of key issues, in order to make their own proposals and to respond effectively to those of government;
- Effective communication. Parliamentarians must be able not only to communicate the positions of governments, but also to develop and communicate their own perspectives on the public interest;
- Policy space. There is a need for flexibility or “policy space” to ensure that international rules can be implemented to secure domestic priorities;

- Building parliamentary influence. There are limits on what parliamentarians can do. The influence of the international community may in some cases overwhelm parliamentarian's ability to influence policy.

IV. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENHANCE THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS?

The moderator, based on the debates, ascertained the following ideas to foster parliamentarians' action and engagement:

At the national level

- Use existing domestic mechanisms to review policies. Support could be provided to parliamentary committees as a counter-balance, and to ensure that proposed laws and policies are appropriate;
- Develop national committees on sustainable development and/or trade. Parliaments without existing committees on sustainable development should consider developing new bodies. An institutionalized structure can help to channel discussion, promote capacity building and enhance access to outside expertise;
- Build capacity for independent policy analysis and communication. It is a challenge to undertake analysis and build ownership by communicating with constituencies and others in government;
- Identification of experts. Parliamentarians may require expert input on specific issues. Support can be provided to help identify experts with relevant skills and knowledge.

At the international level

- Friendship arrangements. Bilateral arrangements between parliaments or specific parliamentary bodies (e.g. trade committees) can help to build capacity and understanding;
 - Regional meetings. Regional meetings can help parliamentarians to meet and share national experiences. Efforts to support integrated assessment of trade policy can support enhanced parliamentary engagement;
 - Participation in national delegations. Participation in national delegations can help smooth implementation of treaties later, as parliamentarians develop expertise on matters they may not normally be involved in;
 - Networking with other parliamentarians. By networking, parliamentarians can learn more about other countries' experiences, and can build on them;
 - International meetings. Meetings held in parallel with major international negotiations can support parliamentarian engagement in national delegations and promote networking and collaboration.
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Summary of the debates

Discussion: Water

Pollution prevention policies would make it possible significantly to reduce the cost of drinking water by reducing treatment and purification costs. At the same time, water treatment and purification infrastructures must be strengthened. Prevention and purification are key questions in dealing with the scarcity of water.

In many countries, overcultivation has tragic consequences for the environment, in particular for water resources. Agricultural planning should be developed in accordance with the availability of water resources, and water should be used effectively and rationally. Crops that are not appropriate to the climate and that require overuse of water resources should be eliminated.

Furthermore, such cultivation may cause a tragic depletion of the water table and may eventually bring about drought, exodus and famine. One solution would consist in imposing restrictions on trade in products that are particularly harmful to the country's environment. Another would be to decree rules prohibiting cultivation inappropriate to the climate and encouraging the production of dryland crops.

In general, countries should learn to use all available water resources (precipitation, water tables, rivers).

Discussion: Energy and climate

Sustainable development is aimed at ensuring a balance between economic development, social well-being and the environment. These three fields are interdependent and must be dealt with concurrently.

Environmental investments bear fruit in the long term. It is therefore necessary to study both major problems and "smaller" ones, as they might have long-term consequences.

At the world level, energy consumption is constantly increasing, and certain countries have begun consuming massive amounts of traditional energy resources (such as coal and other hydrocarbons). It is imperative to reorient this consumption to make use of sustainable energy sources. For example, countries with a potential for hydroelectric energy should be encouraged to develop their infrastructures and produce such energy. Restrictions on the use of nuclear energy

should be limited, as this type of energy could offer a solution in the future. It may also be possible to encourage the development of new technologies and their distribution at an affordable price in the developing countries.

Parliaments should act as pressure groups and foster such development.

Discussion: Trade

To foster sustainable development, trade must be fair. The rules of the game in international trade are often one-sided.

The economies of certain countries of the South are entirely dependent on the export of raw materials, with little added value. These countries are often unable to export their goods because of customs barriers imposed by developed countries. How can the countries of the South achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) if the developed countries hinder their development with customs barriers and at the same time cut ODA? To develop and overcome their excessive dependence on external aid, the developing countries must have access to the markets of the developed countries and create added value by processing their products into semi-finished goods.

In agriculture too, there is a very large gap between the North and the countries of the third world. In the developed countries, agriculture is subsidized, which is not the case in the countries of the third world. Consequently, imports in the third world sometimes cost less than competing locally made products. Trade of this type offers no prospects for the development of such countries. What is more, the reduction of development assistance presents a genuine problem of sovereignty, as the weak States are often forced to withdraw their production and leave their economies at the mercy of the multinationals.

Proposals for UNITAR and the IPU

Sustainable development and the role of parliamentarians should be addressed at two levels. At the national level, the establishment of national sustainable development committees would make possible a better management of sustainable development. A parliamentary support programme would make it possible to improve skills of parliamentarians and to strengthen their position in the State. Some parliamentarians should be given

training in sustainable development matters so that they can specialize in the technical and technological evolution in this field.

At the international level, there should be more forums and more exchange of best practices. The participation of parliamentarians in international meetings such as the WSSD should be strengthened. The establishment of a world sustainable development organization would make it possible to improve the management and follow-up of international questions related to this topic.

As a complement to traditional diplomacy between governments, parliamentary diplomacy should be strengthened, particularly in collaboration with the parliaments of the countries of the North and the South. This kind of diplomacy could contribute to ending armed conflicts, which are an important factor in the destruction of the environment.

Ernst Ulrich VON WEIZSÄCKER,
Member of the German Parliament, President
of the Committee on Environment and
Sustainable Development of the Bundestag

I should like to summarize the debates of this morning.

As regards water, we must consider the questions of pollution, decontamination and recycling. Even if we all consider that water is a public good, it seems that the public funding is not sufficient to guarantee its supply for everyone. We thus need private funding, because the State cannot take care of it alone. It is also important to consider available technologies such as drip irrigation in order to allow an effective use of water.

Regarding energy, I think that it was very interesting to hear from the Indian Member of Parliament that the major consumers of “traditional energies” have a responsibility to finance the transition to the use of new energies. It would be interesting for us, within the framework of the United Nations Framework

Convention on Climate Change, to think about a world system that would oblige the rich countries to finance this transition to cleaner energies.

In the framework of trade, it is essential to put an end to the asymmetry and to the inequitable character of the current system. The protectionism of the countries of the North in agriculture and their tendency to export subsidized products to developing countries are tantamount to a genuine crime. We must elaborate fair rules for trade.

In conclusion, here is a message for developing countries. It is completely understandable that you expect the governments of the North to contribute to establishing a fair international system. But know that the political and economic situation of these countries is not as strong as you may believe. The governments of the United States, Japan and Germany face extremely serious debts. Wealth henceforth belongs to the private sector. Today, it is the private sector that is in the driver's seat. The problems of poverty are partially connected to privatization. In this respect, I should like to mention that I have recently published a book entitled *The limits to privatization*, which presents numerous experiments in privatization, sometimes positive but mainly negative, and raises the question of the collapse of the public sector. The concept of public good henceforth poses problems in countries where the private sector dominates. Indeed, if one defines the public good as something to which we can have access freely, and if there is a market regime, we will note that it is the most powerful actors who reserve for themselves access to this good as if it were free, and who reject the weakest. This is what we see today for example in the debate on biodiversity. Firms such as Monsanto consider biodiversity as a “free” good. They privatize it, and then secure patents, which they resell for absurdly high prices.

Strategic planning session

Statements by the various partners and experts invited to the conference

Béatrice SAINT-LAURENT,
Project Manager, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

I shall speak on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France, Mr. Michel Barnier. I would like to thank and congratulate UNITAR and the IPU for having taken the initiative of organizing this meeting. France fully supports this conference, a fact that to my mind reflects the importance it attaches to parliamentary involvement in sustainable development. Today, we must face an environmental and human challenge that is as silent as it is daunting: the global change that is affecting our planet and the split between the societies that make up our world. It is a challenge that calls for awareness on the part of States, of course, but also on the part of all societies.

Development can only be sustainable if it is shared, but also if it is a shared responsibility. In this constant effort for sustainable development, parliamentarians have a fundamental role to play. First of all, in their legislative function they must implement international conventions and ensure that the corresponding principles are reflected at the national level. In their role as shapers of public opinion, they must make the public aware of the stakes of sustainable development and promote local initiatives. Lastly, they can exchange experience at the international level, as for example through IPU events, to channel, share and encourage national sustainable development efforts.

Sustainable development is the only possible response to the challenge of global change and to the environmental and social consequences of unbridled globalization. As you know, France, together with its European partners, is strongly devoted to this challenge. The aim first of all is to strengthen consideration of sustainable development in international institutions, in particular through the idea of a United Nations environment organization. But it is also to put forward a voluntary reduction of greenhouse gas emissions as part of the post-Kyoto process, and lastly to develop scientifically supported international expertise on biological diversity following the international conference that we held in Paris last January, at the United Nations

Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO).

Sustainable development is not a luxury, but the reflection and an extension of our interdependency. I know that UNITAR and the IPU will do everything necessary to ensure institutional follow-up to this event and to draw up a programme that will be able to meet the needs expressed by parliamentarians here today. I congratulate them and express the certainty that this initiative will contribute to making sustainable development part of everyday reality in our countries and societies.

Félix ONKEYA,
Member of the National Assembly of Gabon and President of the Cooperation and Development Commission of the *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie*

The most recent summit of Heads of State of the French-speaking countries was held last 26 and 27 November in Ouagadougou, and addressed the subject of "the *Francophonie*, a space of solidarity for sustainable development". During this summit, we submitted an opinion to the effect that sustainable development is based on economic development, social equality and environmental protection.

According to this view, the premise for sustainable development would include a series of preconditions such as democracy, good governance, peace, respect for human rights, controlled urban development and demographic growth, poverty reduction, access to education, the eradication of pandemics, food security, the cancellation of the debt and access to credit. Our opinion was included in the conclusion of the summit of Heads of State of the French-speaking countries, which proves that if they mobilize, parliamentarians can make their views heard by world leaders.

The *Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie* has developed numerous partnerships, including with the Energy and Environment Agency of the *Francophonie* (IEPF) and the World Bank. We hope that today's meeting will produce a solid basis for cooperation with UNITAR and the IPU.

Durwood ZAELKE,
Director, International Network for
Environmental Compliance and Enforcement
and representative of the Institute for
Governance and Sustainable Development

The Institute for Governance and Sustainable Development has had the honour of taking part in planning and needs assessments. Our Institute supports the initiative launched by UNITAR and the IPU, and will take part in its development by drawing up manuals and training materials.

We will provide support for regional meetings that will follow up on this inaugural conference, and would like to take part in the definition of the initiative's strategic orientations.

We also wish to provide continuous support to this initiative through the International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement and our partners such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the Governments of the Netherlands and Canada and many others. Parliamentarians must have more weight at the international level, and must bring forth a message of hope with regard to sustainable development.

Scott HUBLI,
Director, Governance Programme, National
Democratic Institute

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) seeks to promote the role of parliamentarians in international processes. I would like to present five lessons that we have learned from our experience in this field. First, capacity-building for parliamentarians requires more than just conferences or workshops. For several years, we have seen the number of parliamentary networks mushroom. These networks are important, as they make it possible for parliamentarians to exchange ideas. However, if the international community is not receptive to them, there is the risk that parliamentarians will spend a lot of time in this kind of meeting, away from their constituencies, without having any real international impact. Parliamentarians may also be frustrated once they return to their parliaments, as they have neither the means nor the tools with which to implement the ideas discussed at such forums. It will thus be important when developing this initiative to think about which democratic institutions are necessary to ensure the concrete implementation of the

project. Secondly, there is a logical partnership between governance institutions and groups that aim to promote good governance in sustainable development. Democracy and governance practitioners have resources available, and they should be used. Thirdly, it is important to underscore the significance of subregional parliamentary networks and of how subregional bodies can work together, which makes it possible to pool resources. Fourthly, support for parliamentarians is more effective when it goes hand in hand with initiatives for communication, awareness and education. I think that sustainable development policies cannot be effective if they are not politically sustainable. This combined approach is the most effective one. Fifthly, the parliamentarians of the developed countries must bring pressure to bear on international institutions to play a more important role. It would no doubt be easier for these parliamentarians to ask for stronger participation and capacity-building than it would be for their counterparts in the developing countries.

In conclusion, I would like to express my support for the initiative taken by UNITAR and the IPU.

Etienne GONIN,
Associate Information Officer, Division of
Technology, Industry and Economics, United
Nations Environment Programme

You as parliamentarians are the voice of the people. Without your involvement to ensure the effective implementation of international agreements and to translate their contents into national legislation, a large number of instruments would be dead letters. That is why we are working actively to build your capacities. Parliamentarians can form pressure groups and work in coordination with various international actors.

We would like to strengthen our cooperation with international partners and support regional initiatives so as to provide the necessary tools for the promotion of sustainable development. For example, we have several programmes supporting NGOs in numerous countries. We are also organizing workshops and supporting the development of national and regional parliamentary networks, and we hope to organize information and awareness meetings within parliaments so as to integrate environmental matters into public policy.

Janos PASZTOR,
Director, Sustainable Development Programme,
Secretariat of the United Nations Framework
Convention on Climate Change

Two framework agreements have been adopted by the parties as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process. The first relates to education, training, public awareness, participation and international cooperation (Article 6 of the Convention). In addition to that article, a framework programme of action reviews the roles of governments, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations. Unfortunately, no direct mention is made of the role of parliamentarians. This is perhaps due to the fact that when the programme of action was adopted, there were few parliamentarians present. However, there is no opposition to the participation of parliamentarians; quite the contrary.

I hope, indeed, that thanks to the initiative taken by UNITAR and the IPU it will be possible one day to reach a critical mass of parliamentarians interested in these questions. This would foster the effective implementation of Article 6 of the Convention. We very much hope to be able to cooperate in the joint UNITAR-IPU initiative.

Peter BRIDGEWATER,
Secretary General of the Ramsar Convention

This conference provides us with a golden opportunity to work together with parliamentarians. Indeed, the national delegations that we usually meet are generally composed of representatives of the executive branch or of the national bureaucracy.

The Ramsar Convention has three pillars of action. The contracting parties are committed to ensuring rational use of wetlands, to designate wetlands of national importance with management programmes and to develop international cooperation. There are at present 145 contracting parties; there are currently 1,428 national Ramsar wetland sites. Ours is the most extensive network of protected areas on Earth. What is meant by sustainable use of wetlands? This refers to the sustainable use of the environmental services of wetlands for the benefit of humans and of biological diversity. Achieving this objective requires the involvement of the greatest possible number of actors in the field. Parliamentarians play a key role as a liaison between government and the people.

The Ninth Conference of the Parties will be held in November 2005 in Kampala, Uganda. I am hoping that numerous parliamentarians will be in attendance. At the next meeting of the Convention's Standing Committee, I will invite governments to ensure that their national parliamentarians attend the Conference. It will no doubt be necessary in the future to train parliamentarians as part of the efforts to ensure a better composition of the delegations.

Rainer ENDERLEIN,
Secretary of the Convention on the Protection
and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and
International Lakes of the United Nations
Economic Commission for Europe

If you are wondering why the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is represented at this conference, I will explain that among our 55 Member States, five are among the poorest in the world. A third of our population lives in areas suffering from water shortages, and one person in seven has no access to clean water. The water problems encountered in Europe are for the most part transboundary problems; hence the need for governments to prevent related conflicts. Numerous international agreements have been adopted on water and atmospheric resources, or on the environment in general. It is now crucial for governments to translate these international principles into national legislation. We must also have the courage to face new challenges, such as the analysis of ecosystems and the services that they provide. Lastly, the various actors responsible for the implementation of the agreements must be active participants in the negotiations; this is true in particular for parliamentarians, who are too often left on the sidelines.

UNECE is working with the 24 United Nations organizations dealing with water. We also work with the signatories of the Ramsar Convention. We hope to contribute to the UNITAR-IPU project at the European level, in particular through our training workshops, which we would like to open up to parliamentarians.

Raynell ANDREYCHUK,
Senator, Senate of Canada, and member of
Parliamentarians for Global Action

At Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), we have worked hard on sustainable development. When our parliamentarians meet, we always write up a plan of action signed by all parliamentarians,

in which they explain what actions they personally will take.

In these plans of action, PGA also sets out what it will do and what it expects from international organizations and governments. Within PGA, we believe that it is critical to establish partnerships and to network to ensure the implementation of international agreements. When we come together, we have numbers on our side.

Parliamentarians must be involved in the negotiation and ratification of these agreements, but also in their implementation. We must set deadlines and work in favour of the implementation of conventions; good political will is clearly not enough. One of PGA's strategies is to work with local governments.

**Ernst Ulrich VON WEIZSÄCKER,
Member of the German Parliament, President
of the Committee on Environment and
Sustainable Development of the Bundestag**

Instead of repeating what has already been said, let me try to link what had been previously said to a topic tacitly hovering over all debates on sustainable development these days. It is, as you may guess, the phenomenon of globalisation, that was systematically addressed by the ILO World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization. I had the honour of being a member of that Commission.

I seem to observe a sense of frustration and impatience, notably among representatives of developing countries. They do not see much progress with regard to financing the MDGs. At international meetings, they meet with government representatives from the North, who express their full sympathy with the demands of the South but who say that it is extremely difficult to find the necessary money.

Public budgets have deep deficits in most OECD countries. Let me now say why. We discussed this at the World Commission. In the past 10 or 15 years, taxation of the rich and corporations systematically went down year by year. The wealthy simply pointed at countries with lower tax rates and threatened to go abroad unless domestic rates were reduced. And there is always a country with lower rates. This leads to a downward spiral.

The surprising thing is that this downward spiral is a new phenomenon. It began only after 1990, and is one facet of globalization. That year, as we know, was a watershed year. It marked the end of the cold war. We were all very happy about it at the time. But soon we realized that capitalism

changed its face after the cold war was over. The fierce rivalry between communists and our system of a democratic free market economy had made it a high priority for the wealthy to keep their countries firmly in the Western camp. This made them tolerate high taxes on high incomes, on property and on corporations. And it made it reasonably easy for governments and parliamentary majorities to run their countries, because there was a strong sense of solidarity, and money was there for redistribution.

To a certain extent, ODA had a similar political motive: it was meant to dissuade developing countries from going communist. After 1990, that motive vanished, and we saw a systematic erosion of ODA.

Democracy, as you all know, is based on the "one person – one vote" principle. The new global market situation, by contrast, is rather characterized by a "one dollar – one vote" principle. Markets are not by themselves supportive of democracy and parliaments. Market actors *were* supportive of us during the cold war, but now have lost much of their motivation. Governments and parliamentary majorities going for redistribution are presently considered a nuisance by the wealthy, if not an enemy. We as parliamentarians should see this shift with a degree of alarm.

Let me now try to outline a few thoughts about how to deal with the new situation.

Let me begin with a vision. As I see it, we need a vision of a good balance between public and private goods. We need them both: Markets and the private sector produce efficiency, innovation, and wealth. But by their very nature, they favour high achievers and the rich. The weak are dependent on the State. In simplified language, markets are good for the strong, while the State is good for the weak.

In addition to this good balance, we need a system of global rules which is respected by all actors of the private sector. In a situation of global competition between countries, it becomes much more difficult for the State to defend the weak because attracting high achievers can be the most promising strategy for increasing wealth in a given country. If we want to enable States to care for the weak, we may need a system of global governance that induces all countries to respect rules of fairness. Corporations should not be allowed to choose the location of their investments based on how weak the regulations are.

Unfortunately, the present system of global governance, the United Nations system, is remarkably weak itself when confronting the giants of the corporate world. The strongest United Nations institution aside from the Security Council is the WTO, but that is the organization that promotes free trade, which once again tends to benefit high achievers, certainly not the weak.

I note with satisfaction that the corporate world has by itself assumed responsibility, both with regard to the environment and to the weak. The term for this is corporate social responsibility, or CSR. But we are well aware that much of CSR is window dressing. How can we find out whether CSR is serious or is intended merely as lip service? Parliaments will find it difficult to judge. We need partners who have easier access to the relevant information. Here I am thinking of civil society organizations (CSOs), that take a closer look at companies, including their networks of suppliers. The presence of CSOs makes it a lot riskier for corporations to violate human rights or destroy the environment.

We should be heading for new alliances between democrats in parliament and democrats outside, notably in the CSOs.

To give you just one example of how such alliances can work, let me mention a scheme introduced in the Netherlands in 1997. It provides a substantive tax advantage for funds committed to ecological and related objectives, in addition to the

classical motive of high returns on investment. The scheme has elicited an increase of 2000 percent, from €33 million in 1997 to €7.1 billion in 2002, of socially responsible savings and investment (SRI). This amounts to a strong signal to capital markets not only in the Netherlands but also abroad. I do hope that other parliaments around the world will join the pioneers in the Netherlands in offering such advantages.

Let me close by indicating the kind of alliances that I see as carriers of justice and proponents of sustainable development. I am thinking of:

- International parliamentary alliances, with the IPU, Parliamentarians for Global Action, Global Legislators for a Better Environment (GLOBE) or “e-Parliament” working as a catalyst;
- Alliances involving the United Nations family including, UNITAR;
- Alliances including well-meaning governments, such as our French hosts, or the Governments of Finland and Tanzania, that have launched the Helsinki Process;
- Alliances involving CSOs.

Any such alliance will help send a signal to the corporate world and the financial sector that democracies and their people have not given up fighting for justice, sustainable development and a healthy environment.

Closing session

Martin CHUNGONG,
Director of the Division for the Promotion of
Democracy, Inter-Parliamentary Union

I should like to warmly thank you all for your participation in this conference. We held very in-depth discussions, and it would be pretentious on my part to try to sum up all that was said. Nonetheless, it is my duty to ensure that we have grasped the importance of your statements so that we can support you in your future endeavours.

It has been said time and time again that parliaments have an important role to play internationally in ensuring sustainable development. The Chairman suggested previously that the question of the role of parliamentarians should be addressed during the forthcoming Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, which will be held in New York next September. I think that is an excellent idea, and I will personally mention it when I return to Geneva.

I listened with great interest to the discussions that took place over the past two days. Our objective was to establish priorities for our initiative, and the wealth of proposals that were made during the debates will make it possible for us to do so. Allow me to set out a few which I believe may be particularly effective in building the capacity of parliamentarians for sustainable development:

- Parliaments must have more information on environmental protection and sustainable development;
- Parliamentarians need greater support to draw up laws that promote sustainable development;
- The participation of parliamentarians in drawing up international legislation should be strengthened;
- Exchanges of views, experiences and best practices between parliaments should be strengthened;
- Parliamentarians should raise awareness in public opinion of sustainable development;

- Links should be strengthened between parliaments and other actors such as universities, NGOs, civil society and the private sector;
- Networking among parliaments should be strengthened, in particular using new technologies;
- There must be stronger parliamentary democracy.

On behalf of the IPU, I would now like to respond to a number of questions that were raised and to present the way in which we would like to work with UNITAR in the future. It is not an aim of this conference to set up new structures or mechanisms, but rather to strengthen those that already exist. I would refer for example to the standing committees of the IPU, which may be used to share knowledge and exchange best practices.

At this very moment, we are holding a meeting of parliamentarians in Geneva with the aim of ensuring a parliamentary follow-up to the work of the WTO; we also plan to strengthen exchanges of best practices between the sustainable development committees of the various parliaments. The IPU is also proposing to strengthen its training programme. A pilot programme is under way in Nigeria, and we hope to be able to extend it soon to other countries. We think that it is important to establish rules for sustainable development, but it is also indispensable for parliamentarians to maintain their independence from governments so that they are able to play their role in the system of checks and balances.

In the coming days we will establish priorities based on your suggestions and will work to draw up a programme of activities with UNITAR. I must say that I was extremely impressed by the support of the different partners, including UNECE, NDI, Globe and UNEP, and I thank them. I would also like to thank the organizers, and the international relations service of the Senate in particular. Lastly, thanks also go to the interpreters for their work.

Marcel BOISARD,
United Nations Assistant Secretary-General,
Executive Director of UNITAR

The problem of sustainable development inevitably concerns members of parliament. It is a serious, urgent and global problem. Members of parliament know better than me what they have to do, but I think that future action will take place at two levels. At the national level, members of parliament can act through traditional parliamentary methods, such as inquiry, consideration in subcommittees, reports or pressure on the executive. For this, members of parliament must have the possibility of conducting independent analyses, which could constitute a problem for the less developed countries. Members of parliament will have to tackle many questions of a technical nature. This means that they will need assistance and that it will be necessary for them to find the best ways of communicating and networking.

As previously said, sustainable development is not a popular concept because it involves sacrifices. In industrialized countries, we can consider these sacrifices, but what can we say about countries in which people live on one or two dollars a day and where there are much more urgent priorities, such as survival itself, for example? It is thus necessary to find original methods to help members of parliament in their task of promoting sustainable development, for example through research into methodologies and training subjects.

At the international level, this may be a question of organizing information sessions before major events. Some already exist. Indeed, every year, for the opening of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, the Danish Government asks our office to carry out a one-week training session for members of parliament who are part of the national delegation. Obviously, it is for governments to make such decisions, but I am mentioning this example to show you how UNITAR can concretely contribute to training members of parliament.

This event was called an inaugural conference because its aim is to open up new perspectives. We already have several ideas, which will now have to be discussed and implemented with our partners.

It is particularly advisable to train members of parliament so that they can include environmental and sustainable considerations in national constitutions. It is also important to tackle the questions of water, climate change and trade. In this spirit, UNITAR may consider organizing training seminars with the WTO. Our purpose, however, is not to favour passive education and a one-way transmission of knowledge, but rather to develop participative training. We propose for example to organize workshops on specific subjects relating directly to national and regional priorities.

To conclude, I have to say that we will go back to Geneva satisfied, impressed and grateful. Your willingness to participate taking on the huge challenge that is sustainable development is for us a source of comfort and motivation. Several training initiatives already exist in the field of sustainable development, and our purpose is to find synergies between these diverse initiatives. This is the reason why we agreed with the IPU to design a programme based on three main pillars: the use of existing mechanisms, the creation of synergies between all existing initiatives, and the concrete and practical training of members of parliament.

This inaugural meeting is taking place at just the right time, when international relations are evolving and sustainable development is a priority. There will be no sustainable development without a struggle against poverty and without greater justice between peoples. I join my colleague from the IPU in thanking the interpreters, our partners in the French Senate, the French foreign office which helped us financially, and I should add the IPU itself. I would like in particular to mention the excellent organization of this event, the kindness of the staff of the Senate and the quality of the speakers. We were happy to work with the IPU, whose organizational capacity is quite remarkable.

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