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Regional Seminar on Achieving the Sustainable
Development Goals for the Parliaments
in the Asia-Pacific Region

**Responding to climate change
Actions of legislators to achieve the SDGs**

Ho Chi Minh City (Viet Nam), 11-13 May 2017



National Assembly
of the S.R. Viet Nam

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

We, Speakers and members of parliament from the Asia-Pacific region gathered in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, from 11 to 13 May 2017 for a high-level Regional Seminar on “Responding to climate change-Actions of legislators to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”. The Seminar was jointly organized by the National Assembly of Viet Nam and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The Seminar examined practical steps parliaments can take to implement the SDGs in our respective countries and in the region as a whole. We placed special emphasis on: sharing experiences and discussing how parliaments could bring the SDGs from global to local level; mainstreaming the SDGs within parliamentary mechanisms; making laws in support of the SDGs; financing the SDGs; monitoring the SDGs’ implementation; and engaging with the public while taking into account the most vulnerable, so as to ensure that no one is left behind.

The thematic focus of our Seminar was on climate change, one of the biggest threats to sustainable development, especially in the Asia-Pacific context. Its intense and wide-spread negative impacts particularly affect the poorest and the most vulnerable, especially women and children. We discussed how crucial it is to address this challenge and how national parliaments could effect concrete actions, particularly in the form of legislations, in order to respond to climate change, reduce natural disaster risks and fulfil international commitments in this respect, especially those under the Paris Agreement.

Our debates focused on five main themes: (1) the role of parliaments in achieving the SDGs; (2) promoting gender equality and health in the context of responding to climate change; (3) challenges, opportunities and response actions of countries in the region; (4) international commitments and requirements for national legislators; and (5) mobilizing resources for the SDGs’ implementation in the Asia-Pacific region.

We recognized the critical role of parliaments in the translation of the SDGs into enforceable domestic legislations and policies. We welcomed the strong commitment by the IPU Member Parliaments to guarantee that they can initiate and ensure the implementation of national and regional sustainable development plans through their legislative, oversight, budgetary and representative functions. We also congratulated the IPU and its Member Parliaments for their active engagement in sharing their experiences and lessons learned for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

We welcomed the launch of the IPU/UNDP SDG Self-Assessment Toolkit for Parliaments. The self-assessment will enable parliaments in both developed and developing countries to improve their performance in regard to key parliamentary functions and ensure that they could actively contribute to the implementation of the SDGs.

We also took note of the study and database on “Global trends in climate change legislation and litigation” that has been produced jointly by the IPU, the London School of Economics and Columbia Law School. This study comes at a critical time as lawmakers and practitioners seek to implement and put into practice the transformative Paris Agreement on climate change.

Our discussions turned to the following questions: What are the concrete actions parliaments can undertake to support SDGs implementation in our countries and in the region?; How can parliaments promote gender

equality and health in the context of responding to climate change through the SDGs framework?; What can we do as parliamentarians to ensure adequate financial and non-financial resources for the implementation of national and regional strategies?; and, How can parliamentarians enhance international co-operation and forge partnerships to translate international development commitments into actions in the spirit of “Turning words into action” of Hanoi Declaration adopted at the 132nd Assembly?

We proactively engaged on these issues and drew up the following strategies, actions and recommendations to advance parliamentary engagement with the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region:

1. We recognize that the SDGs represent a powerful and comprehensive policy framework that can drive inclusive sustainable development in our societies. Parliamentary actions on the SDGs are urgently needed and each parliament should advance the implementation of the SDGs through national harmonisation of appropriate targets and indicators. Parliaments should engage in development, implementation and monitoring of national development plans and ensure meaningful citizens’ participation in the implementation of the goals.
2. The national priorities need to be developed in consultation with citizens, women and men alike, so that they reflect their real needs and expectations. Special emphasis should be placed on identifying and including in the consultations, vulnerable groups and hard-to-reach populations so as to ensure that follow-up actions leave no one behind.
3. Parliaments should make sure that the legislation integrates the sustainable development goals with a holistic and synergistic approach, taking into account the specific national conditions and circumstances. Each parliament should insist that national development plans that integrate the SDGs contain country-specific goals, targets and indicators to help tracking the advancement of the SDGs on the ground. In this manner, parliaments enhance its key role in ensuring that national development plans reflect the human development needs and aspirations of the society as a whole, paying special attention to the most vulnerable. Wellbeing and happiness indicators should also be considered and developed.
4. Each parliament should find effective ways to hold government to account concerning the implementation of the SDGs and the national sustainable development plan. Making sure that the SDGs implementation is on track is a crucial function that could allow parliaments to assess progress and identify obstacles in a timely fashion. Parliaments should increase the use of oversight mechanisms, such as parliamentary hearings, question times and plenary reports, to assess the impact of government policies and programs through a collaborative approach. Parliaments can also encourage national governments to voluntarily submit national reviews of SDGs implementation at international level. It is crucial to raise the awareness of the SDGs in parliaments, mainstream the SDGs within parliamentary mechanisms, and increase inter-parliamentary engagement and participation.
5. All parliaments are urged to use the IPU/UNDP Self-Assessment Toolkit as a effective way to identify how existing structures can be used to advance engagement on the SDGs and whether new ones structures should be put in place to reflect the inter-sectoral nature of the goals. Parliaments should analyze their capacities to deliver on the SDGs as soon as possible and work to improve the performance of their parliamentary functions so as to be at the forefront of efforts to implement the SDGs. Parliaments should also consider creation of parliamentary structures as appropriate that will spearhead mainstreaming of the SDGs in their work. In this regards, National Parliaments should identify focal points to strengthen cooperation with UN bodies for further enhancement of capacity of parliamentarians to promote the SDGs implementation.
6. Climate change threatens to wipe out the impressively hard-earned achievements in the socio-economic progress of the Asia Pacific region and remains an economic, social and environmental challenge to the achievement of the SDGs due to the region’s high level of vulnerability to that phenomenon. Without concrete responses, climate change could put populations at risk, endanger households and government revenues and increase poverty, thereby causing social fragility and further inequalities. All these factors need to be taken into account in relevant legislation and programming.
7. In addition, there is ample evidence that climate change impacts men and women in clearly different and disproportionate ways. For example, natural disasters kill more women than men. The reason for that is to

be found in the socio-economic conditions. Parliaments should actively promote gender equality and women's empowerment as they are both an indispensable objective and an answer to achieving sustainable development. The SDGs framework presents an opportunity to implement policy changes directed at tackling discrimination against women and influencing the allocation of resources in a gender-sensitive manner, including on such areas as climate change and health.

8. Commitments in Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and climate change responses of each country need to be integrated into sustainable development plans, and translated into actions of the government at all levels, of the business sector and of all citizens of the country. Supports from developed countries to the developing countries in forms of finance resources, technology transfer, transparency and capacity building, are the triggers for climate change actions in developing countries.

9. Climate change represents a serious threat to human health and well-being. It can affect health not only through direct natural menaces such as, floods and storms, but also through more complex implications like communicable diseases, food insecurity and population displacement. Parliaments should take effective actions to ensure that the negative impacts of climate change are addressed in the national health strategies and guarantee that quality and affordable health services are provided for all people affected by climate change and natural disasters.

10. Opportunities for sustainable development can be identified in the context of climate change challenges, allowing countries to transform development models to attain the SDGs, but also requiring immediate actions of respective countries and engagement of all stakeholders, in which parliaments play a key role.

11. Parliaments should take stronger and more concerted actions to respond to climate change by maximizing their roles as legislators and supervisors and also by enhancing international cooperation and partnership to share information and experiences on regional and global scale.

12. Disaster risk and environmental degradation present important challenges to our region. Disaster risk reduction and environmental protection therefore need to be part and parcel of the parliamentary engagement on climate change. Parliaments need to make sure that legislation protects the environment and that prevention measures are included in the budget to avert the impact of climate change and natural disasters.

13. In the last 15 years, impressive progress in halting and reversing the AIDS epidemic has been recorded in the region thanks to the commitment of national and local governments, civil society and communities. Important practices and mechanisms have been generated in the HIV sector to facilitate health service delivery; nonetheless there is a need to reinforce laws and policies to ensure that HIV treatment and prevention are accessible for all, regardless of their gender or socio-economic status. We strongly support initiatives to boost fast-track response to the AIDS epidemic, in particular the 90-90-90 treatment target by UNAIDS.

14. Generating funding and mobilizing additional resources for effective implementation of the sustainable development agenda is the central challenge; the success of the SDGs achievement depends on a proper response to that challenge. Traditional and innovative resources from private and public sectors and national and international stakeholders could undoubtedly help to meet the global goals. Through their budgetary functions, parliaments can play an important role in advancing SDGs implementations.

15. Budget allocations for the national sustainable development strategy will be critical to successful implementation of SDGs. Parliaments should make sure that national commitments and sustainable development priorities are duly reflected in the budget and that they are gender-sensitive. International agreements could help establish new targets and monitoring frameworks at national and regional levels focused on financing sustainable development.

16. Parliaments should monitor and facilitate the continuous process of identifying, implementing and evaluating the contributions of each country in order to progress from the current level of contributions, strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, in the context of sustainable development

and poverty reduction.

17. Data quality and collection need to be improved in order to enable parliaments to fully play their part in scrutiny of and accountability for the SDGs. Each parliament must closely examine the capacity of its national data centers to generate disaggregated data and present it in a form that helps analysis and shapes policy, while at the same time allowing for effective monitoring of performance and progress.

18. Parliaments should promote and advocate for strong sectoral, regional and international cooperation on the SDGs especially on climate change, and in particular through the policy dialogues with the participation of the government, research institutes and private sectors, and the development of joint projects between countries serving for peace, stability and prosperity.

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

We request the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community at the 137th IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg. We urge the IPU to promote parliamentary engagement with the SDGs and continue to work with the United Nations and other relevant partners towards the successful implementation of 2030 Agenda.