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Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia



Parliamentary cooperation for sustainable development: Investing in climate change and water cooperation opportunities

23–24 February 2017, Budapest (Hungary)

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

We, members of parliament from Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Hungary, gathered in Budapest, Hungary, on 23 and 24 February 2017 for the third Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The seminar was jointly organized by the National Assembly of Hungary and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The SDGs were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 within the framework of the global and universal programme called *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. We followed up on the conclusions of our first two Regional Seminars on the SDGs held in Bucharest, Romania, in June 2015 and April 2016 respectively. We further identified the opportunities and challenges facing parliaments in exercising their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the SDGs. The discussions were facilitated by IPU tools and experts from the United Nations, academic and research institutes, civil society and government.

The seminar provided a useful platform to learn about implementation of the SDGs in our countries, region and globally. We placed special emphasis on sharing experiences and increasing understanding about how parliaments in the region institutionalize the global goals, facilitate the formulation of a relevant national action plan and its implementation, capture synergies and build coherence at the policy level.

The thematic focus of our seminar was on climate change as one of the biggest challenges of our time, including in our countries and the region. Climate change, among other things, will significantly modify the temporal and spatial distribution of water resources. It is expected to lead to less water being available in our region together with the intensification of extreme water-related events (droughts, floods etc.). In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the majority of the water resources are of a transboundary nature, with many countries highly dependent on flows generated outside their borders. Through the prism of climate-change challenges facing the region, we therefore focused on the key role of water as an enabler of sustainable development and cooperation in our region.

In this context, we are making the following conclusions and recommendations to further advance parliamentary engagement with the SDGs:

- We reaffirm the essential role of parliaments in the effective implementation of the SDGs through their enactment of legislation, adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability.
- We welcome the progress our countries have made in adapting the SDGs to their national context. We are particularly encouraged by the increased engagement of parliaments in the development and implementation of the national SDG action plans. We encourage them to continue to align national strategies to the internationally-adopted goals. As a next step, we urge parliaments to ask their governments for a regular progress report on the implementation of the national plan, and to make sure that it is aligned with other strategies and processes at the national and regional levels. Parliamentary hearings should be used to the fullest, including through inclusion of the public. Each parliament should adopt a motion on the SDGs to serve as its roadmap in this important engagement.

- Governance, as represented by Goal 16, is a key driver of change. The rule of law, justice, effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, and several other elements of Goal 16, provide the enabling environment that is needed to engage people effectively in the SDG agenda. Effective parliaments are central to implementation of this goal. Parliamentarians should work across party lines to invest in the development and strengthening of their institution.
- We reaffirm our commitment to democratic governance and to ensuring that the voice of all people, without discrimination or exclusion, is heard when it comes to SDG decisions. We recommend that parliaments find a way to better represent all citizens without discrimination and raise awareness about the SDGs in all segments of the population. Acknowledgement and enhancement of the contribution of youth in governance transitions, decision-making processes and the transfer of knowledge should receive special attention.
- Equally importantly, parliaments should take measures that strive for fairness, equity and gender equality when designing SDG-related policies and programmes. The needs and capacities of the poor, smallholders and other vulnerable groups should especially be considered.
- We underscore the importance of data for successful and informed political decision-making. Data management systems need to be redefined and developed, so that data is adequately and effectively integrated into legal and policy decisions that concern SDG implementation.
- Parliaments in both developed and developing countries should make sure that they integrate the SDGs into their work, and set up an adequate institutional framework to contribute to their implementation. We urge the parliaments that have not already done so to adopt a motion or a resolution on the SDGs that will serve as a road map for parliamentary engagement with the Goals.
- We also urge parliaments to make use of the IPU/UNDP self-assessment toolkit as a useful way to identify how existing structures can be used to advance engagement on the SDGs and whether new ones need to be put in place to overcome silos. As parliaments also have an important role in international cooperation on SDG implementation, they should closely monitor related national activities. They should also promote and actively take part in assisting the fulfilment of relevant sustainable development goals and targets at the international level, in particular, through the IPU.
- We welcome growing awareness in our region of the reality and the potential human and economic costs of climate change, as well as of natural disasters as its main consequence. We applaud the fact that most countries from our region have ratified the Paris Agreement. We urge those that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession as soon as possible in order to enable implementation in all countries.
- We also applaud the fact that most countries from our region have formulated nationally determined contributions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to increase their adaptation capacities and to take part in climate-related international development cooperation. Through their oversight function, parliaments should ensure that governments regularly review and deliver their nationally determined contributions. Parliaments should use all available platforms to exchange experiences and recommend good practices in this regard.
- We have learned that young children are the main victims of air pollution in our countries and that pollution increasingly affects the health of all, particularly the poor and most vulnerable. We call on parliaments to help devise special measures in this regard. Particular attention should be paid to the health of women, children and adolescents.
- We urge parliaments to make use of the IPU Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change, which provides useful guidance on how to develop the legislation, guidelines and oversight mechanisms required for effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. In this way, parliaments will also strengthen the international response to climate change.

- We welcome the messages and recommendations of the Budapest Water Summit hosted by Hungary and organized by its Government in cooperation with the World Water Council in 2016. Parliaments should approve comprehensive and integrated laws so as to encourage conservation, spur innovation and ensure the sustainable use of water in their respective countries and in relation to transboundary water resources. In this context, parliaments should ensure that the human rights to water and sanitation are translated into national law and that rights-based action plans are developed to ensure equal access for all in accordance with the relevant SDGs.
- Parliaments should also set aside adequate budget allocations and make sure that multilevel, coordinated and efficient water governance exists at the national and regional levels. They should establish legislative and regulatory frameworks that encourage dialogue and partnerships in order to enhance cooperation and establish a water-secure world for all present and future generations.
- We welcome the efforts of the IPU to connect parliaments to the global and regional SDG review at the United Nations. We encourage parliaments of the countries submitting Voluntary National Reviews to the United Nations to get involved in the process of their preparation. Parliaments should also attend each session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development as part of their national delegations in order to help raise awareness of the SDGs and all related processes in parliament.

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

We request the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community. We urge the IPU to promote parliamentary engagement with the SDGs and continue to work with the United Nations and other relevant partners to channel information and scientific evidence that will further support effective action.

We welcome the invitation of the National Assembly of Serbia to host the next Regional Seminar on the SDGs for the Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We will reconvene again in Belgrade in 2018 to continue to learn from each other, assess progress and develop further recommendations for parliamentary engagement with the SDGs in our region.