



**PARLIAMENTARY MEETING ON THE OCCASION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE**

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*Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the
Parliament of the Republic of South Africa*



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“A Parliamentary Perspective on enabling low carbon innovation”**

Programme Director
Honourable Members of Parliaments here present today
Your Excellencies
Distinguished guests

I humbled and grateful by the opportunity you have afforded to me to address this august audience and gathering. Thank you very much.

At the outset, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa on the successful hosting and organising of this meeting of parliamentarians and parliamentary stakeholders on the occasion of the first meeting of the United Nations Climate Conference (COP-17) on the African continent.

This gathering affirms the important role that parliaments and parliamentarians have to play in the UNFCCC negotiating process as an extension of their oversight of government actions and commitments (including international and multilateral treaties and agreements and balancing these with domestic considerations); their legislative role and public participation mandate; as well as to support each other through peer networking, knowledge transfer, capacity building and information sharing activities through parliamentary strengthening organisations such as the IPU.

I therefore specifically want to endorse Clause 16 and 17 of the pre-drafted Draft Outcome Document that has been prepared jointly by the IPU and the Parliament of South Africa, which poignantly address and embolden these salient points.

I have deliberately chosen to commence my input here today with these statements. For me, these generally agreed principles on the role and mandate of parliaments anywhere in the world (irrespective of their unique socio-economic contexts, political dynamics and development challenges), provides the normative framework for informing a parliamentary perspective for creating an enabling environment for a virtuous push and pull cycle for low carbon innovation through the work of parliaments.

Across the world there is now an emerging, prevailing and growing political, economic and social imperative to act in response of the tri-angular simultaneous challenges of:

1. Deepening democratic governance;
2. Responding to the global economic and financial crisis; and
3. Accelerating sustainable development through green growth strategies.

A key realization of the post financial and global economic crisis analysis is that nation-states must invest heavily in the transition to a green economy and prepare for a post-crisis context and new industrial and economic development trajectory where sustainable growth characterised by low-carbon innovation, green jobs and enhanced quality of life are the norm, and where there is a need to avoid punitive environmental taxes and penalties because of a sustainable shift to socially responsible and sustainable environmental behaviour, consumption and production patterns.

The search for sustainable and effective low carbon innovation solutions to climate change and associated global warming through enhanced legislative and policy reforms and improved governmental decision-making, represents one of the biggest challenges confronting parliaments and parliamentarians, legislatures and legislators this century, in both developed and emerging economies.

As a result of its far-reaching, interconnected and interlinked nature for the public policy agenda, these matters can no longer be separated from the broader domestic and international policy issues requiring the attention of parliaments and parliamentarians. Thus, creating an enabling environment for low carbon innovation must be truly and fully integrated into the existing parliamentary mandate, in particular the considerations applicable to the normative framework for:

- *Firstly*, the parliamentary representative and public participation function;
- *Secondly*, the parliamentary legislative function; and
- *Thirdly*, the parliamentary oversight function.

I now wish to turn to these briefly.

The Parliamentary Representative and Public Participation Function:

Parliament's must make concerted efforts to ensure that parliamentary-led dialogue and debate over legislative, policy, regulatory and public finance solutions to low carbon innovation is made accessible to the broadest possible spectrum of the electorate public and constituencies of MPs.

This can in turn be directly translated into expanding the diversity of contributions and inputs from broader organs of society during parliamentary consultations, public participation, hearings and outreach activities. This includes parliamentary activities around draft public policies, legislation, regulation, programs and incentives introduced by central government, as well as counter proposals by parliament and parliamentarians themselves.

This is critically important for ensuring that all interested, affected and concerned parties can have a place at the consultation table, so that these processes do not merely involve those who have the means and resources to participate in the consultative process, but also those whose voices may otherwise be crowded out. Here in particular, I refer to those typically marginalized groupings who are often most at risk and vulnerable to the consequences and effects of climate change and associated global warming, such as:

- The urban and rural poor;
- Indigenous peoples;

- Young people and future generations who are the inheritors of the legacy of the decisions we make today, to name but a few.

Broad-based and inclusive public participation and consultation of this nature can go a long way to ensuring informed legislative decision-making that takes cognisance of factors related to *'low-tech'* low carbon innovation such as those that are the result of resilient indigenous knowledge systems and the support and recognition that these require from governmental policies, fiscal incentives and regulations.

This *'grassroots'* approach can be mutually inclusive and reinforcing with evidence-based advocacy and lobbying such as those put forward by scientific and research communities and the business sector. Legislators can and must play a centripetal role in ensuring that these often opposing polarities do not necessarily stand at odds with each other so that some semblance of balance can be found among the competing priorities and choices they entail, in the broader national, public, economic and social interest.

When this is done effectively, viable, pragmatic and sensible approaches can be found to impactful public-public and public-private partnerships in pursuit of accelerating low-carbon innovation.

As a case study and benchmark of good practice, it is fitting to consider the parliamentary process for South Africa's first White Paper on Climate Change (a direct result of South Africa's commitments at the Copenhagen climate talks in 2009) and the broad-based and inclusive nature of the stakeholder and public participation process that this entailed, including with non-traditional public stakeholders and constituencies. Something that I am proud of as a South African and that I wish to commend my compatriots for.

The Parliamentary Legislative Function:

Parliaments would be well served to identify and map their *'parliamentary DNA'* or *'parliamentary universe'* for low carbon innovation. The make-up and composition of the legislative, oversight and standing committees of parliaments have common but differentiated responsibilities in respect of low-carbon innovation. If not properly managed and coordinated, these can result in uncoordinated, incoherent and ineffective legislative action on low-carbon innovation as a result of unnecessary duplication, overlaps and mandate creep and the associated knock-on effect on policy failure.

Consider for instance the variation between various parliamentary committees responsible for the urban and built environment; housing; transport; minerals resources; energy and electrification; finance; trade and economic development; environmental protection and natural resource management, to name but a few.

Only when these are accurately mapped can the policy nexus and points of intersection between various parliamentary structures be directly translated into integrated parliamentary oversight, legislative decision-making and public consultation, to ensure integrated and coherent parliamentary approaches to low-carbon innovation by ensuring that duplication, overlap and mandate creep between committees are avoided; and that integration, synergy

and a degree of specialisation is fostered, promoted and encouraged amongst MPs within their respective areas of assigned responsibility.

This can help enhance the quality of the legislative process, including counter parliamentary proposals and effective remedy for policy failure by central government and its agencies.

The Parliamentary Oversight Function:

It is through ensuring that evidence based findings result from public participation activities and the better organisation of legislative activities as advocated for above, that parliaments would be better served to exercise their oversight and accountability of the executive branch of government and its agencies, in respect of low-carbon innovation.

These approaches will also equip parliaments and MPs with the ability and confidence to engage with their executive government counterparts and technocrats beyond just an equal footing, but rather more fundamentally from the perspective of the legitimate role that parliaments and MPs have to play in holding the executive to account over their actions, policy failures and goal-attainment in respect of low-carbon innovation. This includes the extent to which the executive arm of government has taken into account the inclusive involvement of broader society and taken on board technical recommendations, considerations, suggestions and alternative policy, legislative and regulatory proposals put forward by parliaments through the collective work of parliamentary committees or private members legislative proposals. This can go a long way to strengthening the impact of effective inter-governmental relations on the enabling environment for low-carbon innovation.

This can apply directly to projects and interventions requiring strong inter-governmental coordination and relations. In South Africa, an example of this would be the Climate Innovation Centre being established under the auspices Gauteng Provincial Government, with technical support from the World Bank Group (Climate Technology Program). The centre will provide an integrated suite of services to support the growth of innovative small and medium enterprises in the clean-tech and low-carbon sector. This includes governmental advisory services to improve the regulatory environment supporting clean-tech SMEs.

Through the allocation of the division of revenue to the Gauteng Provincial Government through the budget vote passed by Parliament, the South Africa Parliament can ensure that spending programs for the centre by the Gauteng Provincial Government and the continued monitoring of the efficacy spending, contribute to improved measures for supporting the competitiveness, enterprise development and market access for clean-tech SMEs.

Additionally, the centre's governmental advisory services work can inform the legislative, regulatory and policy reforms and shifts to be considered by the South African Parliament for improving the enabling environment for clean-tech SMEs in South Africa through targeted implementation activities and programs of national, provincial and local government structures.

In conclusion, I believe that if parliaments individually and collectively through parliamentary strengthening organisations such as the IPU can demonstrate that low-carbon

innovation has been effectively and legitimately integrated into the normative framework of the traditional parliamentary mandate through demonstrable parliamentary practice, then parliaments will be in a much stronger position to advocate and motivate for a formal presence and recognition as a party to the UNFCCC negotiations.

I hope that with these comments, I have contributed in some small measure to enriching the quality and objectives of your deliberations here today and the importance of our collective and valiant pursuit of the worthy role of parliaments in the international and multilateral climate change negotiating process.

I thank you very much.