

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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REMARKS TO IPU PARLIAMENTARY HEARING
19 November 2014

Honourable Saber Chowdhury, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Secretary-General Martin Chungong,
Distinguished parliamentarians,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your invitation.

Wherever I travel, I seek out Parliamentarians. I greatly appreciate this opportunity to now welcome you to the United Nations.

You are at home here. Parliamentarians are vital to every part of our agenda to advance peace, development and human rights.

You are the bridge between the local, national and international. You have your finger on the pulse of people's concerns.

It is fitting and timely that you are focusing on a people-centred approach to sustainable development.

We are entering the final stretch of the process to create an ambitious and concrete action agenda for sustainable development for the coming years.

The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has proposed an ambitious set of 17 goals that builds on the Millennium Development Goals and addresses the many interlinked challenges our world faces today.

The agenda aims to put people and planet at the centre and leave no one behind.

Let me quickly point to five ways in which the goals and approach mark a transformation for global development.

First and fundamentally, the goals will be both universal in scope and adaptable to each country. Goal 1 commits countries to eradicate extreme poverty for everyone everywhere, with special attention to those living with disabilities, the aged and our youth.

Second, while reinforcing the commitment to finish the work of the MDGs, the agenda breaks new ground with goals on addressing inequality, economic growth, jobs, urbanization,

energy, and sustainable consumption and production, including a target to address fossil fuel subsidies.

Third, the environmental dimension of the agenda is fully reflected in goals on oceans and marine resources, and on ecosystems and biodiversity.

Fourth, the agenda also includes a specific goal on climate change – while ensuring coherence with the separate ongoing UNFCCC negotiations.

And fifth, the framework is underpinned with a goal on promoting peace, justice and institutions.

Human rights run through the core of the agenda. Under a rights-based approach, poverty eradication is not an option, it is an obligation.

Adequate healthcare, housing, social security, food and education are not mere commodities -- they are fundamental rights.

They are the foundation of a life of dignity.

Ultimately, realizing the transformative aspirations of the SDGs will depend on action at the national level bolstered by enhanced international cooperation.

Parliaments therefore will play a central role in translating and adapting the global agenda into real change on the ground -- through legislation, fiscal reforms, robust citizen participation and effective oversight, evaluation and accountability.

For all of these reasons, I am very pleased that parliaments have actively participated in shaping the agenda.

I count on the same level of engagement in the remaining phase of the process as we look to the September 2015 Summit and work to make the goals real in people's lives.

Thank you once again for your leadership and engagement. Together, let us build a better world and a life of dignity for all.

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