



Inter-Parliamentary Union



National Assembly of Cameroon



UNITAR

**REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR THE PARLIAMENTS OF THE AFRICAN STATES
CAPACITY BUILDING FOR PARLIAMENTS ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT
WATER AND DESERTIFICATION**

YAOUNDE, CAMEROON, 26-28 JUNE 2006

UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH (UNITAR) – INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION (IPU)

DIAGNOSTIC AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Problems identified	Possible solutions
<p>Environmental protection policies and laws are not very popular and difficult to implement as they often take away people's livelihood by seeking to ease the pressure on natural resources (e.g. bans on wood-cutting and fishing, etc.)</p>	<p>In order to be accepted and implemented, environment policies and laws must be accompanied by measures aimed at providing people with new sources of income and alternative livelihoods. They must also go hand in hand with financial incentives and guarantee an equitable distribution of resources.</p> <p>Parliamentarians are responsible for taking measures to protect the environment but above all, people expect them to find answers to economic and social problems such as how to guarantee food security, combat poverty and achieve economic development. They must therefore elaborate policies and laws designed to protect the environment and achieve sustainable economic and social development.</p>

Problems identified	Possible solutions
<p>There is a genuine communication and collaboration gap between parliamentarians and the executive branch. Governments take little or no heed of parliamentarians when formulating policies and negotiating international instruments on the environment.</p>	<p>Parliamentarians should press their governments to establish mechanisms to enhance collaboration between ministries and parliament.</p> <p>Parliamentarians should be involved in negotiations on international agreements alongside government officials to become more versed in and therefore better able to discuss and ratify instruments once they have been negotiated. They should also have greater contact with national focal points in their countries for multilateral environment agreements.</p> <p>Parliaments should exercise greater oversight of the executive, in particular by questioning ministers more regularly on policy implementation and budget management.</p> <p>Parliamentarians should strengthen dialogue with local authorities by organizing working meetings and on-site visits.</p>
<p>Parliamentarians are often not very aware of environmental problems.</p>	<p>Awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes are needed to enhance the competence of parliamentarians in matters concerning sustainable development. The IPU, the APU and UNITAR have a pivotal role to play in developing this kind of awareness-raising activity for parliamentarians.</p> <p>Environment committees composed of experts should be set up in each parliament.</p> <p>In order to guarantee institutional sustainability within parliament, a follow-up mechanism should be put in place to ensure that those parliamentarians in charge of environmental questions who leave the institution systematically hand over their work to their successors.</p> <p>Parliamentarians should develop a common vision for sustainable development and harness political will accordingly. To have a better understanding of environmental problems as they are experienced on the local level, parliamentarians should strengthen dialogue with the population through: 1) public debates 2) consultations; and 3) field trips.</p>

Problems identified	Possible solutions
<p>Lack of financial resources is one of the main hurdles in implementing environment policies and laws.</p>	<p>To be effective and applicable, environment laws and policies should systematically be accompanied by financing measures.</p> <p>Several sources of alternative financing may be envisaged, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up a national environment fund. - Developing public-private partnerships (to this end, enhance dialogue between the private sector and parliament). - Developing micro-projects funded directly by the communities themselves. - Pooling international, national and local resources. <p>To ensure that international cooperation-funded environmental protection projects last, it is necessary for "recipient" countries to gradually take ownership of these projects so that they may be able to continue them when the donors leave the country.</p>
<p>People are often not very aware of environmental problems.</p>	<p>To ensure that people respect relevant laws and comply with environment policies, they must as a matter of necessity be familiar with the regulations in force and understand their importance and usefulness. Several measures might be envisaged to this end:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve the public in formulating laws and policies, in particular through consultations. - Enhance communication between parliamentarians and local councillors who act as go-betweens with constituents. - Develop information and awareness campaigns. - Include environmental education programmes in school curricula. - Make people aware that they have a share of the responsibility by explaining what are the stakes involved and the benefits of preserving natural resources. - Ensure that environment laws are accompanied by incentives and benefit-sharing mechanisms. - Involve women more in finding solutions and implementing them.

Problems identified	Possible solutions
<p>Managing environmental problems often transcends borders and could be enhanced by greater cooperation among countries in the same region and in particular between parliaments.</p>	<p>Regional inter-parliamentary cooperation could be strengthened by developing an African parliamentary exchange and cooperation platform or a network of African parliamentarians for the environment. This mechanism could facilitate the sharing of experiences and good practices, thereby affording the parliaments of the region the opportunity to become familiar with the laws and policies formulated in other countries and foster the transfer of information and technology. IPU and APU support are crucial in this process.</p>
<p>Lack of knowledge and scientific data often lead to mismanagement of natural resources.</p>	<p>Parliamentarians should encourage the development of research programmes and foster the mobilization of necessary funds.</p>