

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



SDGs and Parliaments

In September 2015, world leaders gathered at the UN General Assembly to launch an ambitious new sustainable development agenda. It builds on progress made since the Millennium Declaration, and seeks to reduce poverty and inequality, improve people's lives, and promote peace, security, good governance, and the rule of law. Many voices, including those of parliamentarians have helped shape the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All state institutions are expected to take part in implementing the SDGs at national and international levels.

Country ownership, government accountability and national policy will be essential to ensure that the new set of objectives is attained. Parliaments are at the forefront of these imperatives, because they play a critical role in meeting those requirements through their lawmaking, budgeting, and oversight functions.

"Stronger parliaments will have to play a central role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This will include ensuring that development policies and plans are drawn up through participatory and inclusive processes, and with regular progress reports submitted to parliament for review."

Quito Declaration adopted at the 128th IPU Assembly in Ecuador, March 2013

The role of parliaments in achieving the SDGs

Parliaments are powerful agents of change. It is by ratifying international agreements, translating the SDGs into enforceable national laws that respond to country-specific development priorities, monitoring their implementation and ensuring government is accountable to the people for national progress on the SDGs, that parliaments can drive that change. By regularly holding hearings and requesting plenary reports, parliaments can bring the SDGs to the attention of the public and the

GOOD PRACTICES

- ✓ **UK:** The Parliament passed a bill that enshrines in law its commitment to spend 0.7% of its gross national income (GNI) on ODA every year (March 2015).
- ✓ **Pakistan:** An SDG Task Force was established in the National Assembly to promote debates, engage, and increase awareness of MPs on the SDGs.
- ✓ **Trinidad and Tobago:** The Parliament established a new Joint Select Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development.
- ✓ **Zambia:** MPs in Parliament formed an SDGs caucus (July 2015).
- ✓ **Africa:** MPs adopt the African Parliamentary Declaration on the Post 2015, assuring their commitment to cooperation towards achieving the SDGs in the region (May 2015).

media, thereby encouraging accountability at all levels. In representing those who elected them, and offering a platform for communication, parliaments can ensure an ongoing dialogue with civil society over the SDGs. Parliaments can ensure the process of developing a national development vision is informed by an inclusive and participatory political dialogue. Through annual parliamentary reviews of proposed government expenditures, parliaments can ensure adequate financial resources are allocated to the achievement of the post-2015 objectives and that sustainable development priorities are reflected in national and local budgets. Their engagement on and oversight of the implementation of national development plans that put the well-being of the people up front and centre can make parliaments the linchpin for success in driving development forward.

Challenges

However, weak governance and institutional capacities were significant challenges to progress on the Millennium Development Goals, and not all parliaments have the capacity to take on the heavy demands of the SDGs framework. Countries in conflict, post-conflict, in

transition, and with weak or fledgling democracies will need help to prepare their parliaments to fulfil their role. Equal attention will have to be paid to fulfilling SDG 16 on “build(ing) effective, accountable and inclusive institutions” as to the other goals. Goal 16’s targets demonstrate an understanding that effective, accountable and inclusive institutions including parliaments are not only important for their own sake, but are also crucial for the successful implementation of the entirety of the post-2015 Development Agenda.

Recognizing the role of parliament as a development actor and contributor to the post-2015 targets and objectives, UNDP and development partners must continue to strategically empower parliaments to enable them to promote, and deliver on the new set of goals. Development partners can ensure that parliaments play an active role from the outset in achieving the post-2015 development objectives. By supporting parliaments and promoting enhanced coordination between all donors and stakeholders, we will be working with an important national institution that can – and must – be positively engaged if sustainable development objectives are to be met.

SDG 16
“Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”.

UNDP support to parliaments

Today, UNDP is supporting one in three parliaments around the world in an effort to build inclusive and participative political institutions, to develop sustainable capacities in legislators and parliamentary staff, to share best democratic practices, and to strengthen dialogue with civil society to prevent violence and promote women’s participation. Through its seventy parliamentary support programmes worldwide, UNDP supports parliaments and parliamentarians to play a key role in making progress in key areas reflected in the SDGs through:

- The provision of expertise, information and knowledge of international best practices and concrete examples from other countries;
- Long-term capacity development; and
- Support to key parliamentary committees and the staff they rely on so that they fulfill their functions.

Results from UNDP support

- ✓ On energy (SDG 7), UNDP partnered with the NGO Climate Parliament to support MPs in **India** from 2012-2015 to:
 - More than double India’s 2020 renewable energy target to 15% in the new national 5 Year Plan;
 - More than double renewables expenditure to 1% of the national budget through an initiative in the Estimates Committee;
 - Successfully encourage the government to re-establish a generation-based incentive for wind power with funding of USD 130 million; and
 - Play a key role in launching USD 157 million in tax-free bonds for renewable energy.
- ✓ On climate change (SDG 13), UNDP worked last year with Climate Parliament and a group of members of the National Constituent Assembly in **Tunisia** on a Constitutional amendment on the protection of the climate. Adopted by 144 votes to 21, the amendment makes Tunisia the first country outside Latin America with a constitutional commitment to protect the climate.
- ✓ On gender equality and women’s empowerment (SDG 5), the Network of Women Parliamentarians in **Cape Verde** succeeded in advocating for the government’s adoption of specific procedures and an implementation framework to combat gender based violence.
- ✓ On HIV/AIDS (Goal 3), the Parliamentary Network for the promotion of Population and Development in **Cape Verde** underwent a series of field missions to promote a wider dissemination and knowledge of and monitor the implementation of Law no. 19/VII/2007, which regulates all aspects related to the prevention, treatment and control of HIV/AIDS, assessing potential challenges and constraints and collecting feedback towards its improvement.
- ✓ Parliamentary capacity building workshops on the SDGs conducted in **The Seychelles** and **Fiji**.
- ✓ Consultative parliamentary workshops organized in different regions in **Lebanon** enhanced dialogue between MPs and civil society on local development needs and challenges.
- ✓ **Marshall Islands** (May 2015) - high level consultation on key national development issues including MPs, Government officials, development partners, CSOs, and academia.