

# FAST FACTS

United Nations  
Development Programme



## Parliaments & SDGs

June 2016

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.

*'We acknowledge also the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments'.*

Para 45, General Assembly Res 70/1 – 'Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'

### The role of parliaments in achieving the SDGs

As national processes for the implementation of the SDGs are being put in place, it is important to ensure that parliaments play their rightful roles in giving political impetus towards the domestication, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. 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 be drivers of positive change. By

### 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:** The Parliament established an SDG Secretariat to provide technical assistance to the parliamentarians to effectively oversee, address the legislative gaps and ensure the rights of their respective constituents (February 2016).
- ✓ **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).
- ✓ **Jordan:** Parliament adopted a law on Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency to increase private-sector investment in renewable energy, including a zero tax rate on renewable energy-related products (2012).
- ✓ **Sierra Leone:** The SDGs were linked to the 8 Pillars of the Agenda for Prosperity, the 3rd PRSP of Sierra Leone, and aligned to each spending category of the 2016 National Budget which was approved by Parliament (Nov. 2015).

regularly holding hearings and requesting plenary reports, parliaments can bring the SDGs to the attention of the public and the media, thereby encouraging accountability at all levels. Parliamentarians, due to their closeness to the people, can serve as advocates, mobilisers and first-line 'ambassadors' for the SDGs. 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 plan 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 2030 Agenda and that sustainable development priorities are reflected in national and local budgets.

### Challenges

However, parliaments cannot play the above roles effectively without a strategic process of mobilization, capacity and

alliance building. For both parliaments and parliamentarians, what is required will be a deep focus on knowledge building, institutionalization of best parliamentary rules, practice and procedures that will entrench their engagement with the SDGs at regional, national and subnational levels. 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 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Recognizing the role of parliament as a development actor and contributor to the SDGs targets and objectives, UNDP and development partners will continue to strategically empower parliaments to enable them to promote, and deliver on the new set of goals.

### 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

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 works to capacitate parliaments to ensure they are fit for purpose to help achieve the SDGs, and able to become champions of peaceful and sustainable human development 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;

- ✓ On climate change (SDG 13), UNDP worked 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), UNDP supported a draft bill in **Colombia** to give constitutional status to the principles of parity, alternation and universality to women political participation. In **Guinea-Bissau**, UNDP supported the specialized Standing Committee for Women and Children to disseminate /raise awareness of Law No. 6/2014 of February 4 (law against domestic violence) in 7 regions of the country. In **Moldova**, UNDP supported a Gender Audit of Parliament, the development of a parliamentary gender Action Plan and the establishment of a cross party caucus – the Women MPs Platform (WMPP)
- ✓ On HIV/AIDS (SDG 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.
- ✓ In **Kosovo**, the Assembly’s Draft Strategic Plan 2016-2020 has included commitments to achieve the SDGs with UNDP support.
- ✓ In **Bhutan**, UNDP is providing assistance to help map the strategic plans of the two Houses of Parliament against SDGs 16, 1, 13 and 15, building on the rapid Integrated Assessment of the 11th Five Year Plan against the goals and targets of the SDGs.
- ✓ In **Georgia**, using the recently published OGP Guide on Implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda as a reference, UNDP is supporting the Parliament and civil society organizations in developing the next (2017-2018) legislative openness action plan in line with the SDG priorities.
- ✓ Parliamentary capacity building / sensitization workshops on the SDGs were conducted by UNDP in a number of countries, including the **Marshall Islands, Rwanda, Mauritius, Lesotho, Bhutan, The Seychelles, Suriname** and **Fiji**.