



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For Democracy, For Women

Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe



CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES
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OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Presented by the Rapporteur of the Seminar, Mr. László Borbély, MP, Chairperson of the Committee for Foreign Policy of the Chamber of Deputies, Romania

We, members of parliament from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Serbia and Romania, have gathered in Bucharest, Romania, on 15 and 16 June 2015 for a Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The seminar was jointly organized by the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Romania and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

We discussed how the SDGs and their targets could apply to our countries and the region and how we could advance their development. We placed special emphasis on the important role parliaments can play in ensuring effective implementation of the SDGs at the national level. The Seminar served as a forum for exchanging experiences and good practices.

Our debates focused on five main themes: (1) The SDGs and why they matter to the region; (2) the role of parliaments in implementing the SDGs; (3) engaging parliaments with civil society to ensure national ownership and support monitoring of progress; (4) gender equality as a critical factor for sustainable development; and (5) reducing risk from disasters and climate change through SDG implementation.

From the outset we recognized the critical importance of democratic governance in the implementation of the SDGs. We congratulated the IPU and its Member Parliaments for their active engagement in the SDG negotiations and campaign for the inclusion of democratic governance as a stand-alone goal and an enabler of development in all societies. We welcomed the strong commitment by the IPU's Member Parliaments to implement the SDGs at the national level, expressed in the Hanoi Declaration adopted by the 132nd IPU Assembly.

We also recognized that the SDGs represent a good framework that can advance the sustainable development of our societies. Parliamentary action on the SDGs is urgently needed and practical steps need to be taken to advance integration of the goals nationally and to monitor progress. We also recognized that parliaments should mainstream the goals into their work and functioning and make sure national policies and plans are consistent with them. Enhanced interaction with civil society and citizens will be critical for the success of our endeavour.

We also agreed that in Central and Eastern Europe, as in many other regions, gender-based disparities disadvantage women and impede their development and that of their societies. We agreed that the SDGs framework presents an opportunity to strike a better gender balance in sustainable development decision-making and determine the gender impact of sustainable development policies, including on issues such as climate change and disaster risk reduction.

Our discussions turned to the following questions: What are the key elements of strong parliamentary action on the SDGs? How can parliaments in our region integrate the SDGs in their work? How can we, as parliamentarians, play a more active role in the implementation process, including assessing the impact of legislation and accompanying measures?

We proactively engaged in these issues and drew up the following strategies, actions and recommendations to advance parliamentary engagement with the SDGs:

- Parliamentarians should work across party lines to build **political will** to implement the SDGs in their countries. Parliaments should have an active role in convening a dialogue with key stakeholders, including citizens, civil society and academia, thereby creating the necessary momentum for the goals. They should advocate for a national coordination mechanism for the SDGs and seek their rightful place in its composition.
- Parliaments should fully discharge all their functions to help **translate the global goals into their national reality**. A national sustainable development strategy to design and support country-specific goals and targets should be devised in each country. Parliaments should advocate for national sustainable development strategies that are developed in an inclusive manner with the participation of key stakeholders, including women' groups and organizations. These strategies should reflect national needs and inspire action at the local level where it matters most.
- The national development strategy should be **gender sensitive**. It should build on existing commitments on gender equality expressed through the Beijing Platform for Action and the Istanbul Convention and should include gender-disaggregated indicators. Both male and female parliamentarians should advocate for this approach.
- Parliaments should make sure that **legislation supports implementation of the national sustainable development strategy**. Each parliament should devise a methodology to make laws compatible with sustainable development. The fact that the SDGs are interlinked and not independent of each other should also be reflected in legislation.
- Each parliament should find effective ways to **hold government to account for the implementation of the national sustainable development strategy**. In doing so, parliaments should define frameworks for periodical monitoring of government action, including on gender mainstreaming. Parliamentary hearings and plenary reports should be used more effectively to oversee action and bring the SDGs to the attention of the public and the media, thereby encouraging accountability at all levels.
- **Budget allocations for the sustainable development strategy** will be critical to success. Parliaments should make sure that national commitments and sustainable development priorities are duly reflected in the budget and that they are gender sensitive. This may require an entirely new approach to fiscal and tax policy as well as incentives for more sustainable production and consumption.
- As elected representative of the people, parliamentarians have a responsibility to make sure citizens are familiar with the national sustainable development strategy and are consulted regularly with regard to its implementation. In order to effectively engage with citizens, parliamentarians should develop clear, understandable and focused messages to ensure **effective communication on the goals** and should serve as champions of the agenda.
- Parliaments should **rely on scientific evidence** in exercising their functions on the SDGs. Special emphasis should be placed on building the statistical capacity of each country to ensure successful tracking of progress and evaluation, including from a gender perspective.
- Parliaments should recognize that the SDGs and their intended impact will shape the lives of different generations. For that reason, they should put special emphasis on **reaching out to young populations**, seek their input into national development plans and promote their role in the implementation. Parliamentarians should also advocate for the inclusion of sustainable development in the country's curricula and education.
- In the specific case of environmental security risk, which is very high in the region, parliaments should explore ways to **turn the risk into opportunity** through implementation of their national sustainable development strategies. In order to deal with this urgent problem,

parliaments should address it through their legislative, oversight and budgetary function as a matter of priority.

- Parliaments should promote and advocate for strong **regional and international inter-parliamentary cooperation on the SDGs** and in particular the development of joint projects between countries. Parliamentary action may also be required to support regional and international cooperation to facilitate technology transfers, trade, capacity building, and possibly financial assistance to lower-income countries.

In order to inspire action on the SDGs, we will bring this Outcome Document to the attention of our colleagues in parliament through all possible channels. We also undertake to bring the document to the attention of other relevant stakeholders.

We accept Romania's offer to reconvene again with the Parliament of Romania and the IPU to examine progress on the SDGs and the role parliaments play in their implementation. We also encourage the IPU to set up a global parliamentary mechanism to track, monitor and evaluate progress so that exchanges and experiences from the regional and national levels feed into the global level and encourage further progress.

We urge the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community and ensure follow-up through its programs and Assemblies. We also urge the IPU to continue to facilitate exchanges of good practices and experiences among parliamentarians at all levels in order to inspire action and maximize the contribution of parliaments to the implementation of the SDGs.