



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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IPU Statement

Mr. Martin Chungong
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High-level Policy Segment of
the Regional Forum on Sustainable
Development for the UNECE region

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Mr. Chairperson,

As legislators, citizens' representatives, overseers of government action and opinion leaders, members of parliament are instrumental in the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

National governments bear the largest responsibility, but the effective implementation of the SDGs necessarily requires the contribution of all parts of society. Strengthening communication, cooperation and coordination, especially among key institutions such as governments and parliaments, is fundamental as it would guarantee coherence, inclusiveness, efficiency, and last but not least, sustainability.

Parliaments can help attain the SDGs in a coherent and comprehensive way also during this challenging time characterised by the COVID-19 pandemic. They can create an enabling environment for the achievement of the SDGs for example by: i) enacting and improving relevant laws and policies in order to ensure they are SDG-compliant; ii) monitoring the implementation of these laws; iii) conveying information on the impact of development programmes to relevant ministries; iv) raising awareness on the SDGs at the community level. Parliaments should exercise their right to scrutinize the actions of governments, but they should also exercise their duty to represent citizens, providing input on their behalf, convey their concerns as well as the needs of those that are marginalised, underrepresented, or vulnerable. They are uniquely positioned to be the bridge between the government and constituents.

Ladies and gentlemen,

On 31 March, together with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) we organised the webinar "Putting the wellbeing of people at the centre of COVID-19 recovery strategies: The critical role of parliaments" for parliaments of the UNECE region. During the event, special attention was given to the importance of increasing parliamentary engagement in the voluntary national reviews (VNR) process, an area that is particularly important to the IPU.

Since 2016 the IPU has been strongly promoting the involvement of parliaments to the VNR process and regularly conducts annual surveys to probe the level of parliamentary engagement over time. According to our latest report, there is a slight weakening of parliamentary involvement in the VNR (50 per cent) compared to 2020 (when it was 55 per cent). Few parliaments have been involved from beginning to end and we all know that, ideally, they should be able to provide their inputs during the entire review.

The point in time when a parliament is engaged in the VNR process is a good indicator of the quality of parliamentary oversight of this government-led exercise. Through the

collected data we can tell that, even though parliamentary involvement has doubled since 2016 and governments are more aware that parliaments' inclusion in the VNR process contributes to its success, there is still significant room for legislatures to provide their inputs in a more substantial way.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Given the important roles that parliaments have in ensuring the attainment of the goals, I hereby call on you, government representatives, to democratize the VNR process, make it really inclusive and participatory. Agenda 2030 and the SDGs are our best hope for ensuring sustainable, inclusive and resilient development. It is only through an effective collaboration that the SDGs can be realized for the good of all people and the planet.

Thank you for your attention.