

Strengthening parliaments and building resilient societies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals

BACKGROUND

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their 169 targets, as the successors to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were in effect from 2000 to 2015. This new agenda was developed through a global consultative process to ensure that “no one will be left behind.”¹ As a result, a “comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative”² inter-connected goals were created with the aim to “end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all”³ by 2030.

For each goal, a series of targets have been established, supported by a global indicator framework to monitor global progress. This framework includes voluntary national reviews (VNRs), which inform the regular reviews of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development that meets under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).⁴ Each country is expected to adapt these indicators as nationally appropriate, perhaps using previous MDGs indicators as a basis, to ensure monitoring capacity.

As countries move forward with the implementation of these goals and targets, parliaments will play a crucial role. A reform of the national legislative framework may be required, budgets will need to be assigned accordingly, and policies will need to be monitored to ensure that they are implemented in the best interest of all individuals, including minority groups. This responsibility will rest with parliaments, as the democratic institutions with this unique capability and responsibility.

While supporting these efforts to increase the quality of life of all citizens, parliaments will also need to look within themselves to achieve SDG 16, the good governance goal upon which the success of all other goals relies. As an institution that represents the people, parliaments must strive to be more effective and accountable, and to render decision-making more inclusive and transparent.

¹ United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

² *Ibid.*

³ United Nations (2015). Sustainable Development Goals. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

⁴ United Nations (2016). High-Level Political Forum. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>



ParlAmericas works with its member parliaments to progress towards the achievement of the SDGs, through programming on hemispheric priorities currently focused on gender equality, open parliament and climate change.

GENDER EQUALITY

Parliaments must play a critical role in achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, by:

- ✓ Adopting a legal frameworks to guarantee women's rights and prevent gender-based violence and discrimination, ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, and rights to economic and other resources;
- ✓ Increasing women's political participation by addressing relevant obstacles, implementing gender quotas, reforming electoral systems, and creating parliamentary gender caucuses;
- ✓ Considering gender implications when adopting legislation and budgets, and overseeing policy implementation;
- ✓ Taking a leadership role in promoting gender equality, recognizing the value of unpaid care and domestic work, and encouraging shared responsibility within households; and
- ✓ Ensuring the active participation of women and minority groups in parliaments' decision-making process.

ParlAmericas' work on gender equality contributes directly to SDG 5 by advocating for women's full and active participation in all spheres of life - personal, public and political – through the Group of Women Parliamentarians. It also promotes the active involvement of men in gender equality work to achieve the above-mentioned objectives. Through its efforts to further the participation and consultation of women and other marginalized groups in decision-making processes and encourage the consideration of gendered and intersectional impacts of policy-making, ParlAmericas mainstreams gender equality in all we do.

OPEN PARLIAMENT

Parliaments must improve their own capacity and processes to fulfill their part in advancing good governance to support the implementation of the SDGs, by:

- ✓ Adopting legislation to guarantee public access to both governmental and parliamentary information and protect fundamental freedoms;
- ✓ Developing and implementing a communications and information technology policy to facilitate access to parliamentary information and ensure transparency of parliamentary activities;
- ✓ Improving internal processes and strengthening capacity through the use of technology and expertise to enable effective, accountable and evidenced-based decision-making;

- ✓ Adopting a legislative framework for citizen participation, and applying mechanisms such as petitions, public consultations, public hearings, social media and other online tools to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making in parliaments; and
- ✓ Holding itself and its members to high standards of ethical behavior through the adoption of a code of conduct and conflict of interest and lobbying regulations, as well as enforcement mechanisms.

ParlAmericas' Open Parliament Network has adopted a [Road Map towards Legislative Openness](#) which translates the principles of SDG 16 into a framework that legislatures can use to develop their respective open parliament national action plans. This road map serves as the basis for the activities of the network, which aims to strengthen parliament through a series of commitments organized in four pillars of work: transparency, accountability, citizen participation and ethics. These efforts all contribute to a more effective, accountable and inclusive parliament.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Parliaments must prioritize efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, by:

- ✓ Adopting a legislative framework aimed at reducing the impact of climate change in the long-term;
- ✓ Following up on the legislative actions and efforts required to materialize the intended nationally determined contributions (INDC) in the periods between the Conferences of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- ✓ Involving citizens in the development of legislation and the supervision of governmental policies on climate change, particularly the groups that are most vulnerable to its impacts;
- ✓ Ensuring that national policies foster the exchange of innovative scientific and technological approaches and policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change; and
- ✓ Improving education, awareness-raising and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning and encourage a change in social behaviors.

ParlAmericas created the [Parliamentary Network on Climate Change](#), a joint initiative with the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (Parlatino), to call for domestic legislation in support of SDG 13 to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. To achieve this objective, parliaments are also advocating for the affordable and clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, sustainable life below water, and sustainable life on land (SDG 7, 11, 14 and 15 respectively).

GLOSSARY

2030 Agenda:	<i>Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development</i> is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity comprised of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets. (Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform)
Benchmarks:	A point of reference that serves as a standard by which others may be measured or judged. (Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary)
Goal:	An ambitious, but specific commitment. (Source: Independent Research Forum 2015)
Index:	A presentation of a collection of data often summarized as a percentage, which serves as a benchmark to measure changes to this data over a period of time. For example, the Latin American Legislative Transparency Index measures countries' progress towards legislative transparency.
Indicator:	A variable that can be measured, that is used to represent progress towards achieving a goal that is not itself measurable. Often, many indicators are used to measure progress towards the same goal. For example, the proportion of population below \$1.25 (PPP) per day was an indicator for MDG 1, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
MDGs:	The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's time-bound (2000-2015) and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many dimensions – income poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion – while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. (Source: UN Millennium Project)
SDGs:	The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), part of the 2030 Agenda (2015-2030), are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. (Source: United Nations Development Programme)
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. (Source: United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform)
Target:	Quantified sub-components that will contribute in a major way to achievement of goal. (Source: Independent Research Forum 2015)