



# PARLIAMENT'S ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

AN ADAPTED VERSION FOR THE AMERICAS AND THE CARIBBEAN



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## ParlAmericas

ParlAmericas is the institution that promotes parliamentary diplomacy in the inter-American system. Composed of the 35 national legislatures in North, Central and South America, and the Caribbean, ParlAmericas promotes cooperative political dialogue, facilitates the exchange of good legislative practices, and produces tailored resources to support parliamentarians in their work. ParlAmericas programming is currently focused on three priority pillars: sustainable development and climate change, gender equality and open parliaments. The International Secretariat of ParlAmericas is headquartered in Ottawa, Canada. [www.parlamericas.org](http://www.parlamericas.org)

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## Disclaimer

The views, designations and recommendations that are presented in this document do not necessarily reflect the official position of UNDP.

# Executive Summary

Sustainable peace and development are essential to the future of the planet and humanity. This vision is laid out in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development \(2030 Agenda\)](#), which aims to end poverty, build peaceful societies, and promote prosperity and people's well-being while protecting the environment for current and future generations. The agenda adopted by the United Nations member States in 2015, calls all countries to translate the ambitious and transformative Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into national priorities and to engage civil society actors, the private sector, academia and science in the quest for a world in which "all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality."

Agenda 2030 explicitly recognizes that parliamentarians have a critical role to play in the adoption and achievement of the SDGs – not only as lawmakers, but also as elected representatives of their people. In addition, parliamentarians played an important role in shaping the content of the Agenda by contributing perspectives on gaps, opportunities and priorities for action through global, regional and national groupings. This input was fed back into the final production of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 goals and 169 targets for action.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda countries have made significant advances in incorporating the SDGs into national development plans and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, including indicator frameworks to track progress. There have been continued efforts towards integrating the SDGs and their targets into sectoral policies and investment plans, and in strengthening national statistical systems. Furthermore, mechanisms, guides and partnerships have been developed to promote the engagement of diverse stakeholders – including women, young people and traditionally marginalized groups – in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. However, much remains to be done.

Legislators are uniquely positioned to act as an interface between the people and state institutions, and to promote and adopt people-centered policies and legislation to ensure that no one is left behind. Parliamentarians in the Americas and the Caribbean have therefore an opportunity and at the same time a responsibility to play a protagonist role in supporting and monitoring SDG implementation, as stated by the 2030 Agenda Declaration.

In 2015, the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption, the Islamic Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, produced a global handbook to enhance parliamentary engagement on the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>1</sup> This publication, developed by ParlAmericas and the UNDP's Regional Hub for Latin America and the Caribbean, is an adapted and updated version of that handbook with a focus on the mechanisms, instruments and practices that parliaments in the hemisphere are using in order to mainstream the SDGs in their work and contribute to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in their countries.

Parliaments and their members, in dialogue with relevant stakeholders, are best placed to determine the most appropriate ways in which they can play an active role in the realization of the SDGs. The present handbook seeks to support this dialogue in the Americas and the Caribbean by: 1) providing a framework to evaluate and design engagement options; 2) sharing information on good practices and 3) discussing opportunities and challenges in the application of international standards to the work of parliaments.

This publication includes a checklist with key factors parliamentarians are invited to consider when evaluating draft laws or legislation from the perspective of the SDGs. It is also helpful for parliamentarians involved in conducting budget and expenditure oversight.

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<sup>1</sup> GOPAC, UNDP and IDB. Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals:  
A Parliamentary Handbook (2015). <http://gopacnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/sdghandbook2.pdf>

## This handbook examines the responsibility parliaments hold in:

- Ensuring that the implementation of the SDGs is founded on the three principles of universality, integration and leaving no one behind – through an approach that promotes the inclusion of marginalized groups and ensures a gender perspective;
- Engaging civil society actors, promoting citizen participation and considering their needs and contributions during the development of legislation impacting the implementation of the SDGs;
- Scrutinizing and monitoring government policies and plans to advance the implementation of the SDGs, while ensuring that it is appropriately tailored to local context;
- Supporting national institutions in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the development of tools and indicators to track progress in achieving the SDG targets;
- Adopting legislation needed to create, update and further develop a legal framework that is conducive to the realization of the SDGs;
- Ensuring the allocation of adequate resources for SDG implementation, through the adoption of the annual state budget and monitoring of how Official Development Assistance (ODA) is used to support it;
- Collaborating with governments to identify how other actors, such as civil society, political parties, the private sector, and the media can be better engaged to achieve the SDGs;
- Building capacity within parliaments to ensure parliamentarians and staff members are equipped with the necessary knowledge and resources to support the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs.



# 1. Intersection of parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals

## 1.1. Core principles underpinning the 2030 Agenda

The foundation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development lies in three principles: *Universality, Integration, and Leaving no one behind*.<sup>2</sup> These principles should be at the core of all efforts to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets. The 2030 Agenda is universal, in that it calls for action by all countries, while respecting the differential capacities of each nation and concurrently building them to enable further action. It is premised on integration, as it promotes cross-cutting coordination with multiple stakeholders, as well as interconnection and indivisibility between all 17 SDGs. And finally, the Agenda seeks to benefit all people, commits to leave no one behind and calls for the meaningful participation of all segments of society – encouraging the empowerment of women and traditionally marginalized groups such as youth, people living in situations of poverty, persons with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, refugees and displaced persons and migrants.

Parliaments can more effectively support and influence the integral achievement of the SDG targets by considering their interlinkages. For example, if we take the case of SDG 5, legislatures can contribute to the achievement of gender equality not only by developing relevant legislation but also by promoting women's political leadership within parliaments and promoting gender mainstreaming in the legislatures.

Furthermore, parliaments have a role to play in looking at how the issue of gender equality cuts across multiple themes and sectors. For instance, as climate change differentially affects women and girls, it is critical that steps are taken to promote gender sensitive climate legislation, while ensuring that work for the empowerment of women and efforts towards mitigation and adaptation are mutually reinforcing.

### Universality

Universality implies that objectives and targets are relevant for each government and actor. This does not mean uniformity, but rather differentiation, applying the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Countries are encouraged to develop a national sustainable development planning process to adapt the SDGs to the local context. Parliaments could contribute to this strategic planning process by aligning their work on adopting legislation (including budget) and overseeing government actions with the national SDG strategy.

### Leaving no one behind

To eradicate poverty and break the cycle of inequality, the SDGs must benefit everybody. Progress must be independent of income level or the presence of exclusion that is often related to, but not always, ethnic or racial condition, skin colour, sexual orientation and identity, gender, having a physical or mental disability, religion, nationality, migrations status and other elements. This challenge fosters the use of disaggregated data to understand each citizen's social obstacles.

Parliaments could create opportunities for citizens to participate throughout the legislative process and specifically target vulnerable or traditionally marginalized groups. They could also develop tools to help assess the impact on marginalized people of legislation they adopt/oversee and public policies it oversees.

<sup>2</sup> UNDP. A multi-dimensional focus for the 2030 agenda (2017), 1. <https://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/dam/rblac/docs/Research%20and%20Publications/Poverty%20Reduction/UNDP-RBLAC-ENG%20RIA%20+Combo%20Training%20Manuals.pdf>

## Integration

Integration of public policies means balancing the dimensions of social development, economic growth and environmental protection. An integrated approach implies managing trade-offs and maximizing synergies among objectives.

Legislatures can contribute to the integral achievement of individual targets by creating more opportunities for inter-sectoral dialogue, establishing mechanisms to assess how actions in one sector are likely to impact other sectors,

promote a holistic approach to national development and prioritize legislative action that will invest and create a series of co-benefits for many areas of sustainable development, leading to a "multiplier effect."

## 1.2. The parliament as a key actor in the realization of the 2030 Agenda

As the elected representatives of their people, parliamentarians have a critical role to play in driving a people-centred development agenda that is reflective of and responsive to the diverse needs of their constituents. In recent decades, there has been increasing recognition of the importance of engaging parliamentarians in efforts to pursue sustainable development pathways that are at the same time environmentally-sensitive and based on inclusive growth. Through their mandates, for example, in making laws and overseeing government policies and programmes – including enacting and scrutinizing the government budget and related legislation – as well as representing the views of their constituents, parliamentarians are valuable partners in ensuring the accountable, inclusive, participatory and transparent governance that is necessary to achieve sustainable development for all.

### Gender equality: A prerequisite for progress across all SDGs

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that gender equality is central to the achievement of each of the 17 SDGs. Development will only be sustainable if it equitably benefits women and men, and girls and boys. Extreme poverty rates, for instance, are higher among women than men in Latin America and the Caribbean, which must be accounted for in the design of all anti-poverty measures.

Gender equality is also a standalone objective, through SDG 5 to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." To measure gaps and progress towards SDG 5 as well as the other 16 goals, it is necessary for countries to systematically collect high-quality, gender-disaggregated data. This in turn requires adequate resourcing, technical capacities, and a gender-responsive approach to all decision-making.

Parliaments should consider consulting the [Montevideo Strategy for Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda within the Sustainable Development Framework by 2030](#). This strategy, adopted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean members states, establishes a road map on how to implement Agenda 2030 through the achievement of gender equality, fulfillment of human rights and women's autonomy. It also identifies solutions to overcoming the structural obstacles to gender equality in the region by 2030.

Recognizing the valuable contribution that parliamentarians can make to sustainable development is critical as the world advances in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its supporting SDGs. The Declaration of the 2030 Agenda is an inspirational document, explicitly committing to “leave no one behind” and establishing that all development should be “people-centered.” This commitment to the social, economic and political inclusion of all -- irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status -- underpins both the goals themselves and the targets for achieving them. Parliamentarians can and have been playing a proactive role in supporting these efforts and it is essential for this role to continue and become stronger.

## Parliamentary groups dedicated to fostering and overseeing the implementation of Agenda 2030

Several countries have established parliamentary mechanisms to give impetus to the realization of the 2030 Agenda and create opportunities for cross-party collaboration around the SDGs. For example, the Senate of Mexico established a working group with representatives of several parliamentary commissions, coordinated by the Commission on Relations with International Organizations.<sup>3,4</sup> In Ecuador the Parliamentary Group for the Eradication of Poverty and the Realization of the SDGs was formed in the National Assembly.<sup>5</sup> The National Assembly of Nicaragua has a parliamentary group on achieving and integrating Agenda 2030.<sup>6</sup> And in Brazil the National Congress created the Joint Parliamentary Front<sup>7</sup> to support efforts on sustainable development.

## 2. The role of parliaments in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals

### 2.1. Representation: Engaging people around the 2030 Agenda and facilitating public participation

The legitimacy of a parliament and its members comes from the fact that they are elected to represent the people of a country (or state or province). The institution and its individual members must, therefore, conceive of and maintain active means of engaging the public to routinely ascertain their interests, opinions and concerns. At the same time, it is important to ensure that public consultations and stakeholder engagement are done in a strategic manner to prevent an overload of information, and create the most conducive conditions for meaningful collaboration and exchange with parliaments and governments. It is similarly important to establish consultation mechanisms and processes that ensure equal participation opportunities for marginalized populations.

Parliamentarians cannot be experts in all topics that they will be called upon to consider. However, they have a responsibility to those who live under the laws and budgets they approve, and to make sure that they are widely consulted and informed on processes that affect them. Greater constituent input can improve the quality of laws and budgets and is more likely to garner public acceptance and satisfaction.

**3** Senate of the Republic of Mexico. Agreement of the Board of Directors of the Senate of the Republic that establishes the methodology for monitoring the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of the United Nations Organization (2016). [http://infosen.senado.gob.mx/sgsp/gaceta/63/2/2016-08-31-2/assets/documentos/2\\_Acordo\\_MD\\_agenda\\_2030\\_ONU.pdf](http://infosen.senado.gob.mx/sgsp/gaceta/63/2/2016-08-31-2/assets/documentos/2_Acordo_MD_agenda_2030_ONU.pdf)

**4** Senate of the Republic of Mexico and CREOI. Report of the Working Group for the Legislative Monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030 (2018). [http://infesen.senado.gob.mx/sgsp/gaceta/63/3/2018-07-11-1/assets/documentos/Com\\_Rel\\_Ext\\_OI\\_Memoria\\_Agenda\\_2030.pdf](http://infosen.senado.gob.mx/sgsp/gaceta/63/3/2018-07-11-1/assets/documentos/Com_Rel_Ext_OI_Memoria_Agenda_2030.pdf)

**5** “Presentación del Grupo Parlamentario por la Erradicación de la Pobreza se hizo con un foro.” Press of the National Assembly of the Republic of Ecuador, December 12, 2017. <https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ec/es/noticia/53028-presentacion-del-grupo-parlamentario-por-la-erradicacion>

**6** “Parliament installs an institutional group to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals.” Recent News of the National Assembly of Nicaragua Press, April 21, 2016. <https://noticias.asamblea.gob.ni/parlamento-instala-grupo-institucional-de-apoyo-al-cumplimiento-de-los-objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible/>

**7** Chamber of Deputies of Brazil. Registration of Joint Parliamentary Front in Support of UN-SDG Sustainable Development Goals (2019). [https://www.camara.leg.br/internet/deputado/Frente\\_Parlamentar/54145-integra.pdf](https://www.camara.leg.br/internet/deputado/Frente_Parlamentar/54145-integra.pdf)

## SDG 16 as a cross-cutting enabler for progress on Agenda 2030

SDG 16's seven tenets of strong institutions (effective, inclusive, responsive, participative, representative, accountable and transparent), as well as peaceful societies, are not only valuable in and of themselves, they are also necessary for achieving all other SDGs.

This is true whether the goal is related to education, health, economic growth, climate change or beyond. Without sustained peace, which goes beyond the mere absence of violence and includes respect for human rights and the rule of law, development gains are reversed. And without inclusion and access to justice for all, inequalities in poverty reduction and socio-economic development will increase and countries' commitments to leaving no one behind will not be met.<sup>8</sup>

The benefits of public dialogue on the work of parliament also apply to SDG implementation. It is critical that the legal frameworks and the funding allocated to achieve the implementation of the Goals, are based on the insights and the perspectives of people who will be affected by and who will benefit from such changes. The SDGs need to be understood and accepted by the population as a set of objectives that can improve their lives and communities.



Photo: UNDP Peru

## Inclusivity in parliamentary membership: the example of Indigenous representation

The recognition of the collective rights of Indigenous people has been incorporated into the Political Constitutions of States where there is a relevant presence of Indigenous population; this is the case for instance of countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay and Peru. Such recognition was also reflected into electoral legislation through the incorporation of provisions related to Indigenous territorial constituencies. For instance, in Bolivia there are seven special constituencies<sup>9</sup> or indigenous seats in the Chamber of Deputies of the Legislative Assembly; in Colombia there are the special electoral constituencies that allow promoting and improving political representativeness in the parliament (two seats in the Senate and one in the House of Representatives);<sup>10</sup> and in Ecuador the Indigenous Territorial Circumscriptions enjoy a special and constitutionally-guaranteed regime.

<sup>8</sup> The report "[Enabling the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through SDG 16+. Anchoring peace, justice and inclusion](#)" produced by the Global Alliance on SDG 16 provides an in-depth analysis of trends, opportunities and challenges based on a series of global case studies and consultations, which could be of source of useful inputs for the work of parliaments in this area.

<sup>9</sup> Law No. 026 of electoral system of June 30, 2010

<sup>10</sup> National Constituent Assembly. Political Constitution of Colombia 1991 (1991). <https://www.procuraduria.gov.co/portal/>

Due to their busy schedules, it is often challenging for parliamentarians to initiate and maintain policy-oriented dialogue with their communities. They can still seek regular input from their constituents at both local and national levels. Some of the means by which parliamentarians or parliamentary institutions can build a public dialogue with people are:

#### **Local public forums**

Either within a constituency or a local community, parliamentarians can organize public forums – formally or informally – in which people can provide feedback on a specific issue (e.g., a law to amend the labour code, the state of education in the community) or a more general discussion to solicit a range of concerns.

Parliamentary committees can engage with the public as they consider laws and conduct inquiries. Consultations can be informal (e.g., public forums and reporting sessions), formal (e.g., public hearings), technical (e.g., surveys), or simple (e.g., requests for submission via SMS) in their design. Consultations can also come in the form of virtual engagement, including online feedback, surveys and social media dialogue.

#### **Public consultations**

#### **Party consultations**

Most parliamentarians are also representatives of a particular political party and through the party structure can organize consultations and gain insight into the perspectives of their supporters.

Depending on the subject or issue that is before the parliament for decision, it is likely that a local or national civil society organization exists and is advocating or working in the field. By collaborating with one or more of these organizations, the parliament (or individual parliamentarians) can expand their reach and ensure that voices that might not otherwise be heard are given the chance to provide input to their work.

#### **Civil society partnerships**

#### **Social media and new technology**

Broader access to mobile telephones and the internet by people has opened opportunities for parliaments and parliamentarians to engage in a faster and more direct dialogue on parliament's work and to seek their feedback and ideas on an ongoing basis.

With advances in technology, the cost of conducting a survey has drastically decreased. Parliaments and parliamentarians are increasingly using online tools to gather feedback from the public, prior to the deliberations on a draft law or as part of an oversight inquiry.

#### **Surveys**

#### **One-on-one and small group meetings**

Individual parliamentarians can arrange to meet with people who have concerns or issues they wish to raise on a one-on-one or small group basis.

The implementation of the SDGs should be taken as an opportunity to create a local bottom up response that reflects the context of local communities, taking precaution to avoid a top-down prescriptive implementation. Therefore, the primary objective should be to establish a dialogue about the SDGs with the local population and authorities, allowing them to express how they want to see work towards achieving the SDGs implemented in their community.

## Promoting participatory lawmaking

Participatory lawmaking is the process by which parliaments, parliamentary groups, committees or individual members of parliament actively engage the public in the development, consideration and review of draft laws that are presented before the parliament.

In some countries public hearings have proven to be a useful tool for parliamentary committees as they allow parliamentarians to listen to civil society experts and to exchange with them. However, all mechanisms listed previously could contribute to strengthen public engagement. In addition, parliaments can increase the effectiveness of these mechanisms by being proactive in providing information to the public regarding its work in reviewing draft laws. This can include the publication (e.g., via newspaper or online) of draft laws, scheduling meetings to review draft laws and calling for submissions from various individuals and groups.

## Facilitating participatory budgeting

Parliament can and should be engaging the public in the development of the annual state budget. Even though the drafting and presentation of the budget is traditionally a purview of the executive branch, the parliament in some countries does engage the public throughout the budget cycle, including through pre-budget consultations to hear people's perspectives prior to receiving the budget from the minister of finance. These pre-budget consultations can be conducted through a budget or finance committee, acting as the primary or main committee to review the draft budget prior to adoption by the plenary. However,

## Citizen participation offices

Citizen participation offices have been established in several countries as a point of contact between parliaments and citizens. Among other things, these mechanisms can be responsible for outreach and communication, such as awareness-raising on the parliament's work, facilitation of consultation spaces, including in some cases "youth parliaments" and support to the submission and processing of popular initiatives. Parliamentary citizen participation offices have been established for example in Panama (Legislative Assembly's Directorate for the Promotion of Citizen Participation),<sup>11</sup> Costa Rica (Legislative Assembly's Citizen Participation Department),<sup>12</sup> Colombia (Coordinating Unit for Citizen Attention),<sup>13</sup> Peru (Participation, Projection and Liaison with Citizenship Office),<sup>14</sup> Paraguay (Citizen Participation Office of the Chamber of Senators),<sup>15</sup> Nicaragua (Citizen Participation office of the National Assembly)<sup>16</sup> and Chile (Parliamentary Academy for the Chamber of Deputies).<sup>17</sup>

Some parliaments hold public outreach initiatives to engage with the public on the work the legislature is conducting. For example, in the parliament of Trinidad and Tobago a "parliament caravan" performs outreach in various public spaces, such as parks, to engage with the community on relevant national issues.

More information on mechanisms and tools for citizen participation in the legislative process are available on the ParlAmericas [Open Parliament Portal](#).

<sup>11</sup> National Assembly of Panama. "Citizen Participation." Last modified 2019. <https://asamblea.gob.pa/participacion-ciudadana>

<sup>12</sup> Legislative Assembly of the Republic of Costa Rica. "Get to know your Assembly." <http://www.asamblea.go.cr/ca/SitePages/Participe%20y%20consulte.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> Congress of the Republic of Colombia. "Citizen Attention Office of the Congress." <http://senado.gov.co/index.php/participacion/atencion-al-ciudadano>

<sup>14</sup> Congress of the Republic. "Citizen participation." <http://www.congreso.gob.pe/participacion/>

<sup>15</sup> National Congress of Paraguay. "About the Office of Citizen Attention." <http://www.senado.gov.py/index.php/menu-contenido/listado-de-categorias-contenido/55-oac/167-atencion-a-la-ciudadania>

<sup>16</sup> National Assembly of Nicaragua. "Citizen Participation." <https://noticias.asamblea.gob.ni/participacion-ciudadana/>

<sup>17</sup> ParlAmericas. "Opportunities for Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process." Last modified 2018. <https://parltools.org/en/citizen-participation/creating-opportunities-citizen-participation/>

it could also include broader consultations from all sectoral committees. Alternatively, the executive can opt for a model of jointly consulting the public, in collaboration with parliament.

Once the budget has been adopted, the committees responsible for monitoring budget implementation should consult civil society as they seek input into whether and how various budget line items are expended. Since it is these individuals and groups that will see the impact of any budget expenditures, they are best situated to inform the committee(s) and parliament if the budget is being properly implemented.

### Public input into monitoring implementation of laws and policies

As with budgets and lawmaking, a parliament has a key role to play in monitoring implementation of the laws it passes to ensure the executive branch implements them in accordance with the intent of the parliament. This includes monitoring the effect not only of primary legislation, but of regulations, rules, decrees, and executive orders: it is essential that parliament has a mechanism to systematically monitor these, and that the mechanism include an SDG lens. And as with the other functions of a parliament, a number of tools can be utilized to gain insight on the impact or challenges found in a law that has been passed by parliament and is now being carried out engaging the public and civil society in this process.

Some parliamentary committees have developed specific action plans that identify the key tools and methods of engagement and how they will be used to maintain ongoing consultation systems. Some parliaments may have annual work plans or legislative calendars that spell out how the parliament and its committees will use specific engagement tools for each draft law reviewed or inquiry conducted. Others have established parliamentary information centres that facilitate voter feedback on the work of the parliament.

### Participatory e-platforms

Online portals to facilitate citizen's input on legislation have been established in several countries; they allow citizens to not only follow parliamentary discussions and submit questions and comments, but also to participate at different levels in the legislative process. Examples of the types of mechanisms that can be used by citizens to participate in the discussion and approval of SDG related legislation include the "e-Democracia portal"<sup>18</sup> adopted by the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, the Virtual Senator portal of the Chilean Senate,<sup>19</sup> the Open legislation Portal of the Argentinian Chamber of Deputies,<sup>20</sup> the Virtual Legislative Forums website of the Peruvian Congress,<sup>21</sup> and the My Senate mobile app in the Colombian Senate.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, many parliaments in the region have created online mechanisms for citizens to participate in online surveys conducted by their committees that seek to get public inputs on legislation being studied, or to present proposals for parliamentary consideration. The Government of Mexico,<sup>23</sup> for example, provides online surveys on topics of pre-draft legislation that are useful and accessible to parliamentarians.

More information on digital tools for citizen participation in the legislative process is available on the ParlAmericas [Open Parliament Portal](#).

<sup>18</sup> Chamber of Deputies. "Interactive Audiences." <https://edemocracia.camara.leg.br>

<sup>19</sup> Senate of the Republic of Chile. Virtual Senator. <https://www.senadorvirtual.cl/>

<sup>20</sup> Chamber of Deputies of Argentina. "Platform for Citizen Participation in Proposals for Laws." Portal of Open Parliament Laws. <https://leyesabiertas.hcdn.gob.ar/>

<sup>21</sup> Congress of the Republic. "Citizen participation." [www.congreso.gob.pe/participacion/foros/?&utm\\_source=website&utm\\_medium=banner&utm\\_campaign=foros](http://www.congreso.gob.pe/participacion/foros/?&utm_source=website&utm_medium=banner&utm_campaign=foros)

<sup>22</sup> Senate of Colombia. "My Senate." Google Play Store, Vers. 2.1.6 (2019). <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=gov.senado.app&hl=fr>

<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Public Function. "Participate with your government online." Last modified 2019. <https://www.participa.gob.mx/>

Depending on the size of the parliamentarian's constituency (ranging from small local groups to a national constituency), the tools used will vary from personal contact and small gatherings to public opinion polling and online surveys. What is important is for parliamentarians to create and carry out plans that make constituent consultations routine and impactful, so voters have a concrete opportunity to provide input into their representative's work.

In all cases where consultation with the public occurs, processes must be designed to ensure that the voices of those most at risk of being left behind are heard and taken into account.

## 2.2. Lawmaking within the Sustainable Development Goals framework

### Guiding legislation for SDG implementation

In various countries, parliaments have taken steps aimed at aligning legislation and national policy with Agenda 2030. The National Assembly of Ecuador passed a resolution adopting the SDGs as a mandatory reference for all legislation and other parliamentary acts.<sup>24</sup> The Congress of Mexico approved changes to the planning law to better integrate Agenda 2030 into national development planning processes,<sup>25</sup> thus laying the ground for greater alignment between the SDGs and the national budget.<sup>26</sup>

Since 2016, the Observatory of Human Rights of the Senate of Argentina<sup>27</sup> has been analyzing the link between legislative work and the SDGs. The thematic relationship of the current laws in the Senate to the SDGs (according to an internally developed scale) is determined, and those Objectives that are prioritized in the legislation are identified. In addition, the Observatory encourages legislators to build consensus aimed at enshrining principles and regulations that promote peace, justice and equality. Finally, it carries out public awareness work on the impact that legislation has on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the national development strategy. The role of this unit is complemented by the 2030 Agenda Parliamentary Observatory of the Chamber of Deputies of Argentina.<sup>28</sup>

In order to successfully advance the implementation of the SDGs, countries should use a wide range of policy and programme approaches. While legislation is rarely the complete policy response necessary to tackle a problem, it is often a critical first step in ensuring an enabling environment conducive to action. Additionally, recognizing that the annual State budget is also enacted as a law of parliament, the lawmaking function of parliaments takes on additional critical importance in terms of ensuring that funds are effectively directed towards addressing the most important national SDG priorities.

### Identifying law reform priorities

Achieving SDG targets often requires law reforms or the development of new legislation. One lesson learned from the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDG) implementation is the need for a systematic approach to enable parliamentarians to undertake comprehensive law reform to provide for the implementation of national priorities.

<sup>24</sup> National Assembly. Resolution that commits the National Assembly with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals through all its legislative acts (2017). [https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ec/sites/default/files/resolucion\\_que\\_promete\\_a\\_la\\_asamblea\\_nacional\\_con\\_la\\_implementacion\\_de\\_la\\_agenda\\_2030\\_y\\_los\\_objetivos\\_de\\_desarrollo\\_sostenible\\_a\\_traves\\_de\\_todos\\_sus\\_actos\\_legislativos\\_20-07-2017.pdf](https://www.asambleanacional.gob.ec/sites/default/files/resolucion_que_promete_a_la_asamblea_nacional_con_la_implementacion_de_la_agenda_2030_y_los_objetivos_de_desarrollo_sostenible_a_traves_de_todos_sus_actos_legislativos_20-07-2017.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> "Decree for the reform, addition to, and repeal to provisions of the Planning Law." Official Gazette of the Federation, February 16, 2018. [http://www.dof.gob.mx/nota\\_detalle.php?codigo=5513502&fecha=16/02/2018](http://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5513502&fecha=16/02/2018)

<sup>26</sup> Secretariat of Finance and Public Credit. Linking the Budget to the Sustainable Development Goals (2018). [https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/231527/Lineamientos\\_p\\_y\\_p\\_2018\\_Anexo\\_2\\_Vinculacion\\_ODs.pdf](https://www.gob.mx/cms/uploads/attachment/file/231527/Lineamientos_p_y_p_2018_Anexo_2_Vinculacion_ODs.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Senate of Argentina. "Human Rights Observatory." <https://www.senado.gov.ar/micrositios/observatorioDDHH/>

<sup>28</sup> Senate of Argentina. Sustainable Development Goals: the 2030 Agenda and its link with legislative activity (2019). [https://www.senado.gov.ar/bundles/senadomicrositios/pdf/observatorio/ods\\_julio.pdf](https://www.senado.gov.ar/bundles/senadomicrositios/pdf/observatorio/ods_julio.pdf)

Consideration could be given to undertaking an SDG Law Reform Needs Assessment, which could be used to review all SDGs and their targets. This should be done to: (i) identify which targets require new laws or amendments; (ii) prioritize those law reform needs and amendments; and (iii) create a medium to long-term legislative reform agenda to guide the drafting and enactment of laws. This can also be useful for promoting better coordination among related public stakeholders on law reforms in support of the SDGs. It can likewise be useful for assessing the entire range of existing laws to identify which issues could be covered by a broader law reform package, rather than tackling each SDG separately.

## Drafting Sustainable Development Goal-related legislation

Every legislature has different procedures for drafting, submitting and enacting laws. However, in general, parliamentarians are being called upon to engage on three types of draft laws (according to and respecting the particularities of each legislative and political system), all of which can be effective vehicles for promoting SDG-related law reform:

### Government-sponsored draft laws

In most parliamentary systems, the government is responsible for drafting a proposed law before it is sent to the parliament for consideration. As the government continues to move forward with implementing its localized SDG plan, ensuring a coordinated programme of SDG-related legislative reform will be critical. To this end, parliamentarians can be proactive in pushing the government to take action on drafting a law. Many mechanisms exist, such as Question Time, interpellations, written questions and invitations to ministers to appear before committees, and proposing a resolution or a non-binding motion, which can draw attention to issues of public interest. Committee inquiries can also be useful and can have the added benefit of integrating public consultations on the issues and enabling parliamentarians to provide concrete recommendations to the government on issues requiring law reform and how they should be handled.

### Draft laws submitted by parliamentarians

In many presidential systems with separation of powers, and in parliamentary systems that are semi-presidential, legislators may frequently draft and introduce laws. These legislative initiatives are a useful way of putting pressure on the government to take action to address SDG related topics, enabling parliamentarians to call attention to particular development issues.

### Citizen-initiated legislative initiatives

In some cases, citizens and/or civil society groups themselves may take the initiative to draft legislation, which they may then ask individual parliamentarians to take up and submit for consideration by parliament. Although rarer, in some systems, it may even be possible for citizens to call for their own “citizen’s referendum” on an issue; if successful, such a referendum can be used to enact or change laws.

Ideally, proposed draft laws dealing with development-related issues will explicitly identify whether and how they support Agenda 2030 and specific SDGs and their targets. This can be included in the explanatory memorandum to the draft law and in the speech introducing the draft law. Parliaments can commission an SDG impact analysis from their own parliamentary secretariats to identify how the proposed draft law impacts the achievement of the SDGs. Some countries already undertake socio-economic, environmental and gender-impact assessments of draft laws. Lessons learned indicate that such a process can be systematized through the adoption of a simple checklist, which can then be applied by the parliamentary secretariat to each draft law produced for consideration. Parliamentarians can then use this information to identify areas for amendment.

You can find a checklist at the end of this publication that provides a guide to assess and review legislation with an SDG lens.

## 2.3. Engaging in the budget approval and oversight processes

To successfully achieve the SDGs by 2030, it is critical to ensure that their implementation is properly funded and to ensure that financing is targeted to reach the most marginalized and vulnerable first. Different forms of funding for SDG implementation include: private sector funds, funding from charities, official development assistance (ODA), foreign direct investment and revenue generated by the state, such as tax and customs revenue. Parliamentarians should be aware of the forms of funding and determine whether the various sources of revenue are being well-coordinated to avoid duplication and overlap.

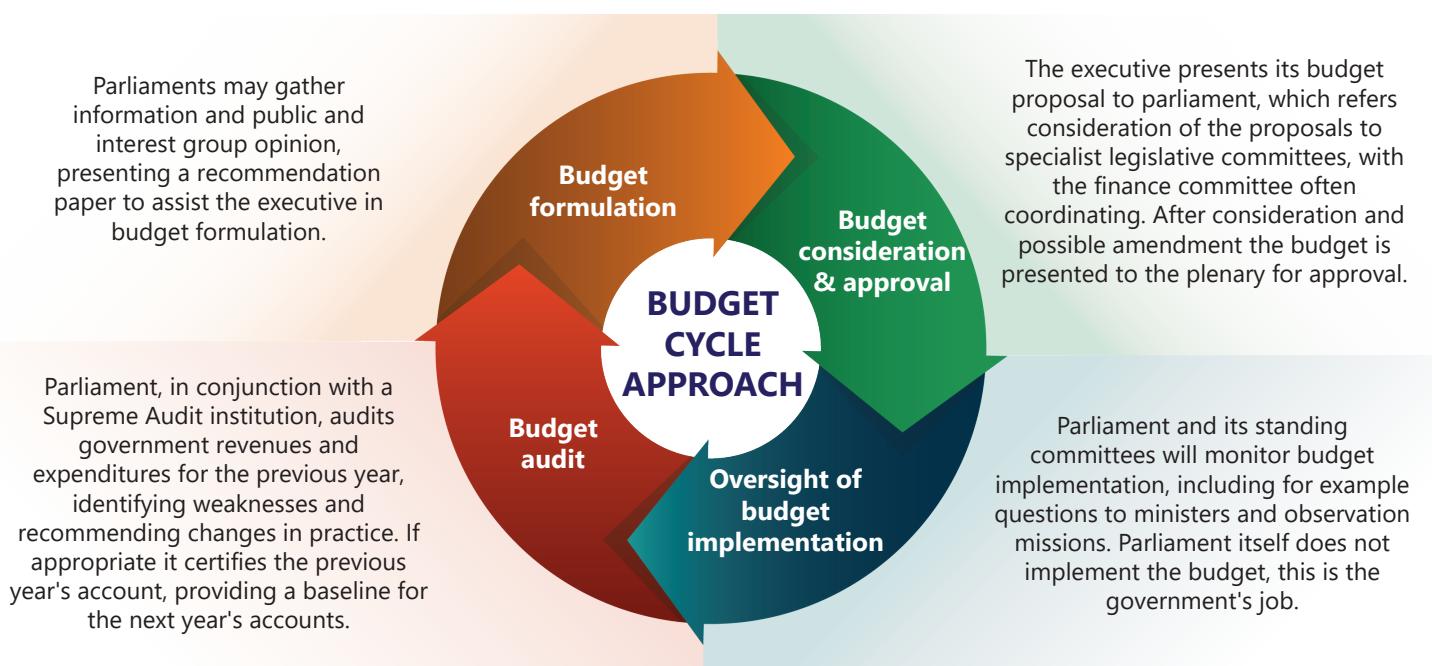
The annual state budget law is the primary funding instrument that each country needs to use to direct resources towards SDG implementation. The fundamental question to consider is whether the budget really delivers outcomes within the SDG framework, keeping in mind the overarching goal of ensuring that efforts are "people-centered" and that no one – especially from marginalized and vulnerable groups – is left behind.

### Annual state budget

The national budget approval process should be an ongoing annual cycle that involves the Executive and Legislative branches in estimating expenditures and revenues, applying available funds to priority programmes and monitoring implementation and expenditure.

Although the Executive branch is formally responsible for developing the budget, parliamentarians play a fundamental role in advocating for budget priorities in advance of (and sometimes during) the budget preparation process. In many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, they can even use their lawmaking and oversight powers to propose formal amendments to the budget once it has been tabled in parliament.

Parliaments have some form of dedicated budget estimates or committee review processes which are intended to facilitate review of the proposed budget. This includes holding public hearings with government officials to drill down into the details of budget proposals and better understand what the budget seeks to deliver. Citizens and civil society may also be involved in this process, participating in hearings and consultations to provide feedback on the effectiveness of government programme delivery and/or lessons learned regarding inefficiencies in expenditure or failure to reach beneficiaries. Informally, parliamentarians can draw on civil society budget analysis or engage more directly with their own constituents to identify which government programmes worked and which failed to deliver expected benefits.



Graphic adapted from: GOPAC, UNDP and IDB. Parliament's Role in Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: A Parliamentary Handbook, 32.

Additionally, following up with government agencies and ministries on the recommendations of state audit reports can usefully inform the contribution of parliamentarians throughout the budget cycle. In some parliaments, this is done systematically via committee processes, under the leadership of the public accounts or finance committees and with the participation of sectoral committees.

Beyond being involved in the recurring processes of budget preparation and approval, parliamentarians can also support budget reforms that better facilitate SDG delivery via advocacy and the creation of an enabling legislative environment. SDG implementation requires whole-of-government approaches. As such, parliamentarians can support innovative ways for the budget to enable various forms of cross-government work.

Detailed financial analysis and costings provided in support of a national budget vary across jurisdictions. In some countries, only quite minimal information is provided to explain the impact of proposed budget measures. Consideration could be given to reviewing the current budget documentation provided to parliament to assess its adequacy in terms of providing guidance on how the budget is designed to progress SDG achievement. Parliamentarians, especially parliamentary budget and committee members may then wish to consider proactively working with the ministries of finance to agree on an SDG-friendly format for budget documentation.

It is also important that the budget documents include not only domestic revenue collected but contributions made through official development assistance (ODA) and international loans. In some countries receiving ODA, this money is kept 'off-budget,' or in a separate 'development budget.' However, it is critical that ODA is integrated into the national budget so that parliamentarians can properly assess the total budget being allocated towards national development priorities and scrutinize proper accountability of the entire budget. Otherwise, there is a risk that ODA in some sectors will lead to unsustainable budgets, while other sectors remain under-funded. Additionally, it is more difficult to validate public accountability for development assistance expenditures if they are not included in the budget. Similar considerations apply to the in-country expenditures and activities of international NGOs and philanthropies, and of international organizations.

## Overseeing Sustainable Development Goal budgets and expenditures

One of the most critical roles for parliamentarians in supporting effective SDG implementation is to confirm that the funding allocated for SDG achievement is effectively and accountably spent in a manner that produces sustainable and impactful results. This is consistent with the development effectiveness agenda with the overall objective of ensuring that both domestic money and international funds are spent in the most effective way possible. Development effectiveness looks at issues of both value-for-money and actual results for people, especially the most marginalized and vulnerable.<sup>29</sup>

In most parliaments, budget oversight is undertaken by specialized parliamentary committees mandated with reviewing the government's expenditures at the end of the budget cycle. Although these committees play a critical role as part of the domestic accountability framework in any country, they are frequently under-resourced, with both limited funds to carry out hearings and field monitoring activities, as well as limited staff member capacities to assist them with their analysis and reporting.

## Gender-responsive budgeting

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is a strategy to achieve gender equality by ensuring that interventions required to eliminate inequalities between women and men and boys and girls are adequately financed. SDG 5 includes a specific indicator - C.1 - that commits countries to developing systems to track and publicize budgetary allocations for gender equality. GRB therefore enhances parliaments' oversight role over national planning and budgeting processes. Keys to success in countries that have successfully implemented GRB include broad alliances and institutional support across the government, parliament and civil society.

## Parliamentary budget offices and the SDGs

The Congressional Budget Office of Argentina contributes to the analysis of the nation's budget by preparing reports for the benefit of parliamentarians and especially the budget committee. Those reports assess if the budgetary implementation of legislation, including the national annual budget, is contributing to the achievement of the SDGs and if the expenses are effectively linked to this purpose.<sup>30</sup>

In the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office was included in its Strategic Plan, and a Parliamentary Budget Expert provided strategic advice to the Standing Finance Committee.<sup>31</sup> The Committee on Economic Affairs of the National Assembly of Ecuador reviewed the 2017 and 2018 national budgets, aligning them to the 2030 Agenda, as well as ensuring adequate budget allocation toward social expenditures and priority groups (woman, youth, persons with disabilities).<sup>32</sup>

In some countries, attempts have been made to set up some form of independent parliamentary budget office, or at least a budget unit within the parliamentary secretariat to enable higher quality support for this vital task. Such units should be staffed with budget and finance specialists that can provide expert economic and financial advice and analysis to parliamentarians.

In the context of SDG budget monitoring specifically, one of the key challenges that parliaments face is the need for disaggregated data to assess the impact of spending in terms of achieving the overarching goals of the SDGs. Notably, localizing the SDGs is critical to success, and is necessary to ensure that funds and programmes are properly targeted to those most in need. In this regard, parliamentarians have a critical role to play in requesting governments to collect and make data available on the needs of their own constituencies to feed back into larger national development planning and budgeting processes.

<sup>29</sup> AWEPA. "Safeguarding the Interests of the People: Parliamentarians and Aid Effectiveness." Portal for Parliamentary Development (2010). <https://agora-parl.org/node/3204>

<sup>30</sup> Congressional Budget Office. Budget Identification of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – Methodology (2019). <https://www.opc.gob.ar/2019/05/16/identificacion-presupuestaria-ods/>

<sup>31</sup> Parliament of the Republic of Trinidad & Tobago in discussion with ParlAmericas, October 2019.

<sup>32</sup> Management and coordination of Internal Relations of the Parliament of Ecuador in discussion with ParlAmericas, October 2019.

This could be particularly valuable in countries where budget data is poorly collected and produced. Parliamentarians, and especially members of public accounts, budget and finance, or special SDG committees may wish to consider proactively working with ministries of finance and the national statistics office to identify gaps in current data collection and reporting and to work on improving how information is collected, disaggregated and provided to parliament. Parliamentarians can also work to access information about their home constituencies and the special needs they may have which need to be reflected in budget allocations and expenditures. Such proactive data collection could have additional benefits for overall SDG reports, which will be required both to track progress against national SDG plans and to feed into global monitoring systems.

One of the most challenging parts of budget oversight is tracking where the money was spent and what impact it had on people's lives, for good or for bad. While audit institutions can assist with assessing whether funding was spent in accordance with laws and regulations, performance audits are less common. However, parliaments may want to consider providing these powers to their state audit institution through law reform. Information and communication technologies are increasingly being used to assist with budget oversight and accountability, including parliamentary oversight. By collecting and publishing finance and expenditure data, new technological tools are now allowing data to be more easily disaggregated (e.g., by gender, demographics, geography) and interrogated by parliamentarians and others interested in assessing how funds were spent.

## Climate sensitive budgeting

A strong methodology for climate-sensitive budgeting and expenditure tracking is a necessary foundation to ensure strategic long-term investment in national mitigation and adaptation planning. [The Climate Public Expenditure and Institutional Review](#) (CPEIR) is a methodology developed by UNDP to identify government base line expenditures for target sectors on the national level. It allows countries to assess the percentage of GDP spending on climate change, the sources of this spending and the related institutional architecture. This methodology has already been successfully applied in several countries in the Americas including Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador and Honduras,<sup>33</sup> out of 31 globally. While to date Ministries of environment, Ministries of Finance or Planning have been the main partners of CPEIR assessments, this methodology holds significant potential to support parliaments in their role of guidance and oversight of the budget process.

## 2.4. Monitoring the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

One of the most important duties of parliamentarians is overseeing the executive branch to ensure accountability for the efficient and effective delivery of expenditures, laws and programmes to the population. To this end, parliaments are usually given strong powers of inquiry, interrogation and oversight and play a critical role as one of the most powerful domestic accountability institutions. Agenda 2030 recognizes explicitly that ensuring accountability during SDG implementation is of critical importance to guarantee that the Agenda is effective in delivering results for people.

<sup>33</sup> UNDP. Experiences in the application of the methodology of Public Expenditure and Institutionality for Climate Change (CPEIR) in Honduras, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador and El Salvador (2019). [http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/es/home/library/environment\\_energy/experiencias-en-la-aplicacion-de-la-metodologia-de-analisis-del-.html](http://www.latinamerica.undp.org/content/rblac/es/home/library/environment_energy/experiencias-en-la-aplicacion-de-la-metodologia-de-analisis-del-.html)

## Developing internal mechanisms for legislative monitoring of the SDGs

The Chamber of Senators of the Congress of Paraguay, in their work to achieve the commitment of Open Parliament to “provide oversight from the legislative branch on the achievement of the SDGs,” has created the Institutional Program for the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Different internal entities participate in this programme and promote the adoption of legislation focused on the fulfillment of the SDGs, identify priorities and challenges, provide political oversight and post-legislative scrutiny to the implementation of the Goals, as well as the training and empowerment of the legislators and parliamentary staff in the matter.<sup>34</sup> In Trinidad and Tobago, the parliament created the Select Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development,<sup>35</sup> and the Parliament of Jamaica designated the Internal and External Affairs Committee<sup>36</sup> to consider all matters related to SDG implementation.

## Committee oversight of Sustainable Development Goal implementation

Committee oversight is one of the strongest mechanisms available to parliaments to engage in SDG implementation. It gives parliamentarians an opportunity to directly assess in more depth whether policies, laws and programmes are effectively implemented in support of the SDGs and, if not, to make recommendations on how to improve implementation. Parliamentary committees usually have powers to demand information and documents from government bodies, to interrogate government officials and to hold hearings and examinations (including through field visits) to inform their understanding of how the government is discharging its duties towards the population. Committees give parliamentarians the opportunity to undertake detailed examinations of critical issues by allocating more time to individual issues and engaging a wide cross-section of stakeholders in their deliberations. In this regard, parliamentarians can play an essential role as a link between the State and the people, including the most marginalized and vulnerable.

### Using existing subject committees

- Committees are usually already well-established and will have funding and supporting staff members.
- Subject expertise will already exist within the committee membership and staff.
- There will be no need to change the rules of procedure to create a new committee (though the rules could still be reviewed to more explicitly reference SDG oversight).
- It gives more time to undertake in-depth scrutiny of legislation and to provide oversight in relation to each SDG and target (compared to a single SDG committee which would be required to consider all SDG-related laws and policies).

### Creating a new SDG committee

- The launch of a new SDG committee provides an opportunity for parliament to make a clear public statement about the importance that parliament attaches to the SDGs.
- The committee could act as a central SDG focal point within parliament, both for the government to work with and for civil society and the public to direct their advocacy efforts.
- A single committee may make tracking SDG-related legislation easier (though the breadth of SDG issues means that virtually all laws will now have some relevance to the SDGs and should be considered in cooperation with the relevant sectoral committee).

<sup>34</sup> Institutional Development and External Cooperation from the Honourable Chamber of Senators – Republic of Paraguay in discussion with ParlAmericas, September 2019.

<sup>35</sup> Together 2030 et al., Engaging parliaments on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs: representation, accountability and implementation: A handbook for civil society (2018). <https://www.together2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Engaging-parliaments-on-the-2030-Agenda-and-the-SDGs.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Planning Institute of Jamaica. Jamaica Voluntary National Review Report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018). [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19499JamaicaMain\\_VNR\\_Report.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19499JamaicaMain_VNR_Report.pdf)

Many parliamentary committees will already be engaged in activities that contribute to SDG oversight, as their sectoral mandates likely cover one or more of the SDGs. To ensure more holistic SDG oversight, however, consideration should be given to reviewing the breadth of the mandate of, and the practical aspects of oversight undertaken by all existing committees.

If the parliament decides to mainstream oversight of SDG achievement through existing committees, the SDG targets for which each committee is to be responsible should also be clear from the relevant terms of reference. In addition, a coordination mechanism, such as a quarterly meeting of committee chairs or their nominees, can help avoid an approach that "siloes" attention to particular SDGs in particular committees. If a parliament is committed to establishing a specific SDG committee to act as a focal point and to take the lead in ensuring SDG monitoring and oversight, consideration could be given to mandating an existing committee and to giving it an oversight and coordination role across all the activities of government and with regard to the particular objectives of the national development plan, rather than leaving it with all responsibility for SDG monitoring.

### Special parliamentary bodies responsible for auditing and studying environment and sustainable development

In Canada, the [Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development](#) is appointed by the Auditor General of Canada (an Officer of Parliament) for a seven year term. The purpose of this commissioner is to assess the effective use of resources, progress and state of the work the federal government is conducting on environmental and sustainable development issues, as well as to oversee the environmental petition process. These [assessments](#), as well as recommendations, are reported to parliament and referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. The reports are discussed through parliamentary committee hearings allowing parliamentarians to oversee government actions on the SDGs.

### The role of parliaments in promoting Open Government in the Americas and the Caribbean

Government openness is indispensable for the effective monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs, enabling parliamentarians to access information in an open format which can expedite analysis (including by third parties) and support evidence-based decision-making. Parliaments also have an important role to play in advancing government openness. They can review and adopt relevant legislation (i.e. access to information, lobbying and conflict of interest, fiscal transparency), set the national agenda and lend weight to openness initiatives, build political support across party lines, hold the government accountable to openness commitments and improve parliamentary openness. These efforts can be amplified through the Open Government Partnership (OGP) which brings together governments and civil society representatives from 79 countries across the world.

For more information consult: [Parliaments as Partners for Open Government Reform](#).

Whatever decision is made, ideally some sort of cost-benefit analysis should be carried out to assess the various options, before parliament decides how it would like to structure its engagement with SDG oversight. Below are some advantages of using dedicated versus sectoral SDG committees in parliaments.

It is also possible to adopt both approaches: review and revise the mandate of existing committees to better fit with Agenda 2030 and create an overall SDG committee to review progress and coordination generally, or re-purpose an existing committee with the task.

### Parliamentary inquiries

Another of the powers that most parliaments wield is the ability to initiate an inquiry into any matter of public interest. Although rules of procedure in each country might require different processes to be followed to initiate such inquiries, these are a valuable tool that parliamentarians can use to draw attention to SDG issues of importance. Parliamentary inquiries can be conducted through an existing committee and be a

critical policy and monitoring mechanisms in support of the SDGs. They allow parliamentarians to call witnesses, ask for and examine government documents, organize public hearings, and debate in greater depth the issues related to addressing a policy problem.

Importantly, the process of engaging the public is of particular benefit – most parliaments allow for written, oral and online public submissions, as well as for experts and others with specialized knowledge to appear in person and present oral evidence. At the end of an inquiry, the committee will produce a report, which represents a critical opportunity for parliamentarians to present the government and the public with policy, legal and programme recommendations for action.

### **Written and oral questions and interpellations**

One of the simplest but potentially most effective parliamentary methods for demanding accountability on SDG implementation from the government is through mechanisms that enable parliamentarians to directly interrogate government ministers or other officials regarding matters falling within their portfolios. These mechanisms differ depending on the form of the legislature, but their aim is the same: to invite ministers or officials to appear in committee or plenary, to ask written and oral questions (Question Time), and to call for a public response.

Regardless of which form of questioning is used, these interrogatory mechanisms can be extremely useful ways for an individual parliamentarian to raise an SDG issue of public interest in the parliament and to call upon the government to explain what it is doing in response.

Questions and interpellations can examine SDG planning and implementation processes broadly (e.g., What is the status of the preparation of the national SDG plan? When will it be tabled in parliament?) or it can be much more specific and inquire about implementation of a specific SDG or target (e.g., What is the government doing to address issues of inequality in accordance with SDG 10?). They can even question specific activities in relation to a target (e.g., What is the government doing to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life in accordance with SDG 5, target 5.5?).

#### **Written and oral questions**

- This is a process used in parliamentary systems, whereby a certain portion of sitting time is dedicated to questioning ministers.
- Questions can be posed by government-aligned or non-government members. In a parliamentary system, these ministers often already sit in the parliament as members.
- Often, the requirement to answer oral questions is reinforced by a system where parliamentarians may ask ministers questions in writing, and where minister's answers are published as part of the parliamentary record.

#### **Interventions**

- Interventions are traditionally used in systems with a strong separation of powers where ministers do not ordinarily sit in the parliament and must therefore be invited to answer questions from parliamentarians.
- In some parliamentary systems where regularly scheduled Question Time does not occur, parliamentarians can use intervention to require cabinet ministers to explain a law or policy.
- Accordingly, interventions need to be submitted with notice to give a minister sufficient time to arrange to attend. In some parliaments, an intervention can be linked to a motion of non-confidence in the minister or the government.

### 3. Institutional arrangements for Agenda 2030

#### 3.1. Coordinating efforts for better implementation and oversight

##### Cross-institutional commitments on SDG implementation

National covenants on the realization of the SDGs with the endorsement of all three powers of the State were signed in Costa Rica in 2016 by the President of the Republic, the President of the Legislative Assembly and the President of the Supreme Court<sup>37</sup> and in Paraguay in 2017 by the President of the Republic, the President of Congress and the President of the Supreme Court.<sup>38</sup> A key aspect of these instruments is that they transcend administrations and set a commitment that remains binding for successive legislatures and governments.

The Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of Chile are represented in the Economic, Social and Environmental Commissions at the National Council on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>39</sup> In El Salvador the Legislative Assembly is represented in the country's National Council for the SDGs coordinated by the Office of the President of the Republic.<sup>40</sup>

A Private Members' Motion was approved by the Senate of Trinidad and Tobago, ensuring that the implementation and monitoring of policies relevant to the SDGs would be the responsibility of the Parliament. This motion is reflected in the National Development Strategy,<sup>41</sup> which was laid in the House of Representatives and the Senate. A Joint Select Committee was additionally created to further review, analyze and provide recommendations for the draft National Strategy.

Parliament should be engaged in all aspects of the SDG implementation cycle, including planning, decision-making, monitoring and evaluation. This is not only for political expediency, but to foster a deep ownership of the SDGs within parliament and among parliamentarians. When laws are adopted or amended, and budgets related to SDG implementation need to be adjusted, parliaments should be able to debate the changes with full awareness of the background and impact of the decisions they are taking. The way that a country will coordinate SDG implementation across all of its areas of activity will depend on a range of factors, including the structure of its political system and the main internal and external stakeholders. This said, the development, implementation and oversight of some form of national development plan is recommended as a good practice and one which can be enhanced through parliament's participation as outlined in the next page.

<sup>37</sup> Presidency of the Republic of Costa Rica. "Costa Rica: First country in the world to sign the National Pact for the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals" Presidency of the Republic of Costa Rica, September 9, 2016. <https://presidencia.go.cr/comunicados/2016/09/costa-rica-primer-pais-del-mundo-en-firmar-pacto-nacional-por-los-objetivos-de-desarrollo-sostenible/>

<sup>38</sup> Republic of Paraguay. Joint declaration among State Powers of the Republic of Paraguay reaffirming the country's commitment to join efforts to pursue compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2016). <http://comisionods.mre.gov.py/themes/ods-py/assets/docs/Declaraci%C3%B3n%20Interpoderes.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> Chamber of Deputies of Chile. Resolution on the adoption of the 2030 agenda of the United Nations. <https://www.camara.cl/pdf.aspx?prmTIPO=DOCUMENTOCOMUNICACIONCUENTA&prmID=46984>

<sup>40</sup> UN DESA. Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2018), 65. <http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN97468.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Vision 2030 National Development Strategy 2016-2030 (2016). <https://www.planning.gov.tt/sites/default/files/Vision%202030-%20The%20National%20Development%20Strategy%20of%20Trinidad%20and%20Tobago%202016-2030.pdf>

### **National development task force or steering committee**

Some form of taskforce or steering committee may be established by the government to oversee and guide SDG implementation. While such a body is usually set up by the executive branch, a good practice is to provide for inclusive membership, not only by including representatives of parliament, but also from the private sector and civil society. Where the parliament is represented on such a committee, it is important to establish a formal report-back mechanism from its representatives, ideally via an appropriately mandated committee to the plenary.

### **National development plan formulation**

A multi-year, strategic roadmap setting out how a country aims to achieve sustainable human development, a national development plan outlines key priorities and indicators for measuring success. National development plans need to be specifically reviewed and aligned with the SDGs to create a single national blueprint for development that incorporates global SDG commitments and localizes them to address national and sub-national priorities. Parliament should be engaged in the formulation of the national development plan: it should be tabled, discussed and approved by parliament prior to implementation.

### **National development plan implementation**

After the adoption of a national development plan, the executive branch should regularly report back to parliament on progress achieved and challenges faced with the plan's implementation. The parliament's rules of procedure should allow the government's report to be referred to an appropriately mandated parliamentary committee for detailed consideration, including hearing submissions from the public on its contents, and a report back to the plenary allowing the committee's report to be tabled and publicly debated there. Countries may also voluntarily produce periodic progress reports that will be considered by the United Nations High Level Political Forum; these reports should also be tabled in parliament and discussed.

### **Coordinating with lead ministries**

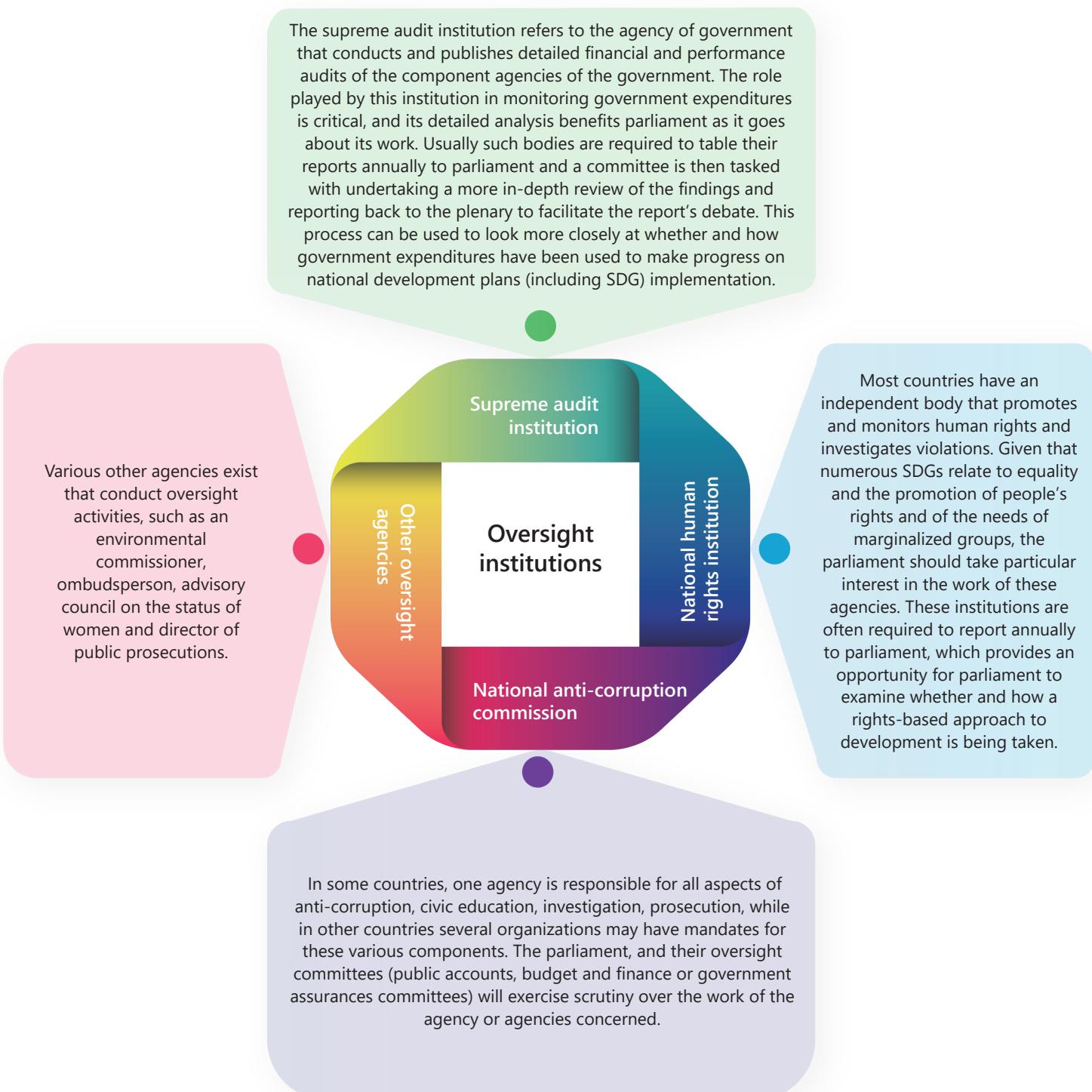
In some countries, oversight of the national development plan is led by one ministry (usually the planning, finance or development ministry). The parliament's rules of procedure should provide for a regular review by an appropriately mandated committee of the performance of such ministries, with a report back to the plenary and public debate. Such a mechanism ensures that parliamentarians and the public are aware of development implementation issues and challenges.

### **Working with sub-regional authorities**

Implementation of the SDGs is an opportunity to create a local response that reflects the context of local communities. Therefore, it is important to establish a dialogue about the SDGs with local authorities and people that allows them to express how they want to see the SDGs implemented in their community. Such a dialogue should be a natural part of the interaction between the government, the parliament, parliamentarians and the public. There is value in working with representatives of local government and communities, from all political affiliations, to build a local development plan, that would normally be formulated under the local government's leadership. Parliamentarians can nevertheless use their powers and resources to contribute to this process. Parliamentarians can also seek to verify that there is coherence between national and local development plans and ensure the SDGs are fully mainstreamed in both.

## Working with other oversight institutions

Oversight institutions have an important role in monitoring the work of the government in the implementation of SDGs. Some of these institutions may report to the executive branch, while others report directly to parliament. No matter the specific details of their mandate and reporting structure, coordinating efforts with these institutions is vital to ensuring effective oversight of SDG implementation. Below is a list of the most common oversight institutions that can support the work of parliaments:



Parliament should encourage, where appropriate, the sharing of evidence and analysis between oversight institutions. It should also promote cooperation in a manner that maximizes each agency's capacity and incites the sharing of technical expertise to avoid duplication of functions and resources.

### Working with National Statistical Offices

In the majority of countries of the Americas and the Caribbean, one government agency or ministry is responsible for the collection, interpretation and publication of official statistics, such as unemployment rates, annual birth and death rates, cost of living and health indicators. Their work is critical for the implementation of the SDGs, as they collect data that will determine if, when and to what extent, indicators and benchmarks for each SDG have been achieved. Parliaments should, through their oversight function, verify that the necessary disaggregated data (e.g., by gender, demographics, geography) is collected, processed and shared and that the national statistics office has the resources and capacity to do this. Legislation providing that the head of the office may not be subjected to political direction in the technical areas of the office's activity is also usual. Once collected and shared, the data will provide evidence that can be used by parliaments in their oversight of SDG implementation. In the absence of global indicators for some specific targets, countries can develop their own provisional set of indicators in order to prevent stagnation of action and promote interinstitutional accountability.

### Collaboration with local level institutions and actors

To achieve an effective implementation of the SDGs, local actors (including municipal and local assemblies and governments) should be recognized as key stakeholders and therefore empowered to play a meaningful role in the process of drafting, amending and implementing legislative frameworks. To help facilitate his input, adequate funding should be provided to enable local public engagements as well as for local programming. Similarly, during national monitoring and evaluation of the implementation, localized SDG indicators should be considered and/or developed.

Parliamentarians can also seek to verify that there is coherence between national and local development plans and that the SDGs are fully mainstreamed in both.

## 3.2. Building institutional capacity to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals

The effective implementation of the SDGs requires that all public institutions strengthen their capacities as well as those of their members and staff. Parliaments in the Americas and the Caribbean are advancing in the development of systems and practices that will contribute to the success of their countries in achieving the objectives of Agenda 2030. To accomplish this task, all parliaments will need to continue building new capacities and reflect on how their internal systems must be strengthened to ensure they will advance the 17 SDGs.

### Collaboration between the parliament and national human rights institutions

Costa Rica's national human rights institution, the Ombudsman, is legally mandated to submit and present an annual report to the Legislative Assembly. Although this is not required by law, members of parliament typically engage in a debate with the Ombudsman after the presentation to clarify various issues in the report. The Special Permanent Committee of Human Rights also regularly seeks the opinion of the Ombudsman. While these exchanges are not explicitly framed in the context of the SDGs, they have been covering multiple SDG-related issues since the adoption of Agenda 2030.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> IPU and UNDP. Global Parliamentary Report 2017—Parliamentary oversight: Parliament's power to hold government to account (2017), 81. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2017-10/global-parliamentary-report-2017-parliamentary-overight-parliaments-power-hold-government-account>

Many parliaments have already developed knowledge products and guides that parliamentarians can use to help them consider the Goals as they go about their constant interaction with the public and the government. Other parliaments may assess their internal capacity and limits to what they can do themselves, due to shortages of staff members or of members of parliament themselves, for instance. To overcome limitations, at times, parliaments have established projects and programmes with organizations, to assist them with capacity building, preparation of legal frameworks and the creation of tools and mechanisms to foster the achievement of the SDGs. Some examples of those tools might include workshops, seminars and peer-to-peer coaching for staff members and parliamentarians. When integrated with long-term planning, such special project support can have a significant impact on a parliament's capacity, as it continues to work towards being a full and active partner in SDG implementation.

Parliaments that want to be active in SDG implementation in their country could build a case for requesting support from international and regional organizations that provide funding, technical advice and other resources to support parliamentary capacity building and engagement in the delivery of the various Goals. In addition, parliaments can seek funding from international financial institutions and other regional development banks. These institutions were established to, among other things, build state institutions to guarantee that member countries meet their long-term development objectives, including the SDGs.

## Role of parliamentary staff members

By the nature of their job, parliamentarians must be generalists. The variety and complexity of the issues a member faces on a daily basis – from addressing constituent concerns to reviewing draft laws – requires them to quickly gain knowledge on disparate topics. No matter their professional or other experience and expertise, they will encounter many issues that are outside of their areas of experience. Thus, parliamentarians rely on parliamentary staff members to deliver support and analysis that is required to do the detailed work of a legislator.

Almost all parliaments and their members face the challenge of having to engage with an executive branch that has more resources and expertise than they do. They must work within these constraints to play a constructive role in adopting and monitoring legislation and budgets, and they will face the same constraints in working for SDG implementation. This means that parliament will need highly skilled staff members who have access to clear and strong information, data and evidence to be able to provide critical and timely advice to individual parliamentarians and to committees. Without these human resources, a parliament will not be able to fulfill its role in the implementation of the Goals.

Specific ways that staff members help parliamentarians obtain the knowledge, information and data required to substantively assess any given issue include briefings, hearings, identification of stakeholders, research and general support for the preparation of amendments and reports from committees. Staff members provide support to parliament, its committees and members in the scrutiny of relevant legislation, the annual state budget and the monitoring of initiatives.

In addition to the general staff of the parliamentary secretariat, below are the three main structures under which staff members are often organized within a parliament.

- 1. Committee support staff:** Each committee is assigned dedicated professional staff members, including legal, sector and procedural support staff members to provide direct assistance to the chairperson and members of the committee as they conduct meetings, hearings and deliberations.
- 2. Dedicated professional units:** In some parliaments, professional staff members are organized into units based on areas of expertise. These units – which may have mandates covering issues such as legal affairs, parliamentary procedure, public outreach and so on – are responsible for providing advice and support to all committees and members, primarily on a demand-driven basis.
- 3. Specialized units:** There is a growing trend toward establishing units within a parliament that are well-resourced and have a specific role related to a core function of the institution. The most common of these is the parliamentary budget office, staffed with highly-skilled professionals, that provides independent analysis to relevant committees regarding adoption and monitoring of the annual state budget. Some parliaments have also established parliamentary institutes and

parliamentary libraries,<sup>43</sup> a sort of in-house think tanks that provide detailed and nonpartisan scientific research and analysis for the parliament.

Notwithstanding the method by which staffing is organized, such staff members should not only be aware of the SDGs, but how they are being implemented and recognize the key actors for implementation. The SDGs should be “top of mind” as the staff members work on a daily basis in the sector in which the committee has jurisdiction.

It is worth noting that the resources provided to parliaments to engage professional staff members are often limited. As the SDGs cover almost all aspects of development in any given country, it will be a challenge to upgrade staff member capacity so that they understand, appreciate and become fully conversant on the SDGs and their objectives. Trained and knowledgeable staff and parliamentarians are essential for SDG implementation. This will likely require that a parliament conduct an audit or assessment of its staffing to understand whether or not it has the capacity and resources to meet the needs of SDG fulfillment. Such an assessment will enable the leadership of the institution to identify gaps that call for an investment to ensure that parliament has sufficient capacity to provide the background materials and analysis so that it can effectively be a full actor in national SDG implementation.

Going a step further, many parliaments have formulated and adopted multi-year corporate strategic plans that are based on an assessment of needs and that identify a roadmap for the reforms and resources required to increase capacity and to fulfil its core functions. Such a plan is a good basis for providing the evidence required to advocate for resource allocations from the annual state budget and from donors that will support the parliament in its efforts to increase capacity for SDG implementation.

A key element to take into consideration when developing capacity assessment and subsequent strategic plans is the key role that parliament is expected to apply in ensuring that the development, funding and implementation of legislation is evidence-based. As mentioned, the financial and human resources allocated to support parliamentary work are limited, and it would not be feasible – or even desirable – for parliament to host in-house technical expertise on all the matters covered by the SDGs. It is critical, therefore, that an appropriate partnership is put in place, together with the necessary engagement mechanisms, to facilitate collaboration between parliament and key knowledge-generating institutions, within government (such as the technical departments of various ministries) as well as outside (most obviously academia, but also civil society, international organizations and so on).

### Orientation guides on the SDGs for political parties

Recognizing that political parties’ buy-in is a key precondition for parliamentary leadership on the SDGs, the United Nations Development Programme in Costa Rica and Ecuador developed orientation guides to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among political organizations.<sup>44,45</sup> These orientation guides serve as practical tools to facilitate integration of the SDGs into political party programmes, but also to assist citizens in reviewing the various programmes against the commitments articulated in the 2030 Agenda.

<sup>43</sup> IPU and IFLA. Guidelines for parliamentary research services (2015). <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/9759>

<sup>44</sup> UNDP. Guidance Primer on the 2030 Agenda for Political Organizations and Citizenship (2016). <http://www.ec.undp.org/content/ecuador/es/home/presscenter/articles/2016/10/26/cartilla-de-orientaci-n-para-organizaciones-pol-ticas-y-ciudadan-a-sobre-los-ods.html>

<sup>45</sup> UNDP. Orientation guide for political organizations and citizens: Articulating government programs with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (2017). [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/costa\\_rica/docs/undp\\_cr\\_Guía\\_ODS.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/costa_rica/docs/undp_cr_Guía_ODS.pdf)

## Role of parliamentary political party groups

Working with and through a party affiliation is an important aspect of parliamentary work and allows for the promotion and advocacy of party positions and ideas within the parliament. Debates and discussions are a central facet of parliamentary life. Each party will have its priorities for policies, legislation and budget allocations to address the needs of their constituents. But while parties may differ on how to ultimately achieve the SDGs, the country will have to report as to whether or not it achieved the Goals.

In almost all parliaments in the Americas and the Caribbean, members who are elected on behalf of a political party sit as a party group.<sup>46</sup> If a party is the majority in parliament (depending on the parliamentary system), it is well positioned to organize in support of ministers and the executive branch who will be responsible for ensuring that SDGs are implemented in the country and for reporting internationally on the commitments made. One way of doing this is to establish an SDG working group, whose primary objective is to work with the various ministries that oversee SDG implementation to ensure the perspectives of party members and constituents are reflected in draft legislation and the budget prior to introduction to the parliament.

Through the working group, the party has a chance to discuss issues that are likely to be raised by the opposition and minority party groups and to fine tune their position before the draft law or budget is introduced. It can also be a venue for discussing potential amendments to such documents once the public has provided its input through parliamentary procedures, such as public hearings at committee. For opposition parliamentarians - no matter the means of organization - it is equally important that the SDGs are integrated into the work of their party, that there is a clear idea of how they can best be implemented and that strategies are put in place to monitor the government's SDG-related actions.

It is also important to note that over the lifespan of SDG implementation (2015-2030), party groups may very well move from opposition to government (and vice versa). Each party group should be well informed on the SDGs and committed to their implementation, to ensure that a change in government does not result in unnecessary delays in implementation.

## Cross-party groups

Cross-party groups of parliamentarians provide an opportunity for members with common interests to discuss the promotion of legislation and policies that reflect those interests. These groups allow for the breakdown of party barriers and promote a dialogue among members that can then be used to forge a consensus that then can be advocated within the various party groups and in parliament in general.

Given that the SDGs cover almost all areas of development, in some parliaments groups have been established to advocate for specific issues of concern among members. For example, a women's caucus will advocate for SDG 5 (gender equality), an open parliament group for SDG 16 (accountability) and a green caucus chapter for SDG 13 (climate action).

But there is also room for general cross-party work on the SDGs. Such a group can be a venue for education, promotion and advocacy for the SDGs in general. It can also be a key group in the promotion of the institutionalization of the systems required (and noted throughout this manual) for a parliament to be an active and key participant in implementing and monitoring concrete actions on the Goals.

An all-party group can also be a venue for political consensus and advocacy within the various political parties represented in the parliament. The group should ensure that not only the parliamentarians that are members of the group are informed and engaged on the SDGs, but that they liaise with their respective parties to share SDG-related knowledge so that those parties are also informed and engaged with the Goals. They could also serve as a mechanism to advocate and represent the parliament in negotiations with the executive on issues related to the SDGs.

<sup>46</sup> In different countries, these groups are known by different names, including parliamentary group, caucus or parliamentary party.

## How can my parliament engage in the national SDG process?

As it has been previously mentioned in this document the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly acknowledges 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."<sup>47</sup> The following is a non-exhaustive list of ways in which a parliament can effectively contribute to the national SDG process:

1

**Raise awareness:** Parliaments can consider organizing informational seminars and capacity development activities. These could contribute to building basic understanding of the 2030 Agenda among all parliamentarians.

2

**Engage in design and oversight of national plans:** Governments should provide explicit opportunity for parliaments to engage in the preparation of national SDG plans and could, for example, establish an inter-ministerial, cross-sectoral, and inter-committee working group for the development of a national plan, providing ample opportunity for parliamentary representation. Parliaments will need to insist that SDG national plans are sent to them for review through an open process. Once a plan is adopted, parliaments could demand a yearly report by the government on its implementation and hold public hearings.

3

**Review existing parliamentary mechanisms:** Parliaments could review their own existing parliamentary mechanisms to determine which could be used for SDG implementation and oversight, and to explore which new processes or mechanisms might be necessary.

4

**Create a dedicated parliamentary committee on the 2030 Agenda:** This committee could play a strong coordinating and oversight role and should ensure a participatory process, allowing for hearings with civil society and other sectors, it should also have direct and regular interaction with all government departments, as well as the authority to demand reports or convene expert witnesses.

5

**Strengthen existing committees:** Each standing parliamentary committee could identify which Goals and targets are relevant to their mandate and what legislative reform initiatives might be necessary to fill key gaps, and they could also conduct impact assessments of draft laws to assess alignment with the SDGs. Additionally, cross-party mechanisms could help ensure that the SDGs are duly mainstreamed within permanent committees.

<sup>47</sup> Bernstein, Johannah. Drawing on good Sustainable Development Goals practices – options for Sweden (2018). [https://agenda2030delegationen.se/  
wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Drawing-on-good-Sustainable-Development-Goals-practices\\_slutrapport.pdf](https://agenda2030delegationen.se/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Drawing-on-good-Sustainable-Development-Goals-practices_slutrapport.pdf)

**6**

**Play a proactive role in law-making:** Parliaments can also play a key role in supporting the implementation of the SDGs by creating robust legal frameworks which are gender-sensitive and human-rights based, to ensure the realization of the SDGs for all members of society. Public hearings will be essential in this process to ensure transparency and accountability.

**7**

**Engage stakeholders:** Parliaments should review the ways in which they engage with key stakeholders to ensure greater opportunities for their involvement through, for example, public hearings, public briefings and technical meetings. Parliaments could consider developing or strengthening communication outreach strategies to more effectively hear from the public. It is important for parliament to proactively engage with the public to both understand the public's priorities and assess SDG implementation on the ground.

**8**

**Scrutinise national budgets from a gender perspective:** There are several ways for parliaments to scrutinise national budgets. First, parliaments could conduct a gender equality and SDG audit of the national budget. Second, each of the relevant portfolio committees could determine the full cost of implementing SDG activities within their sphere with attention to potential differentiated impacts on all genders. Additionally, parliaments can use their oversight powers to demand more funding for gender equality measures as an accelerator of all SDGs within the national budget.

**9**

**Monitor SDG implementation:** Parliaments can initiate their own public inquiries into SDG implementation. Regular reports should be submitted to parliaments to track country level progress. Monitoring should also consider the importance of the human rights-based approach within the SDGs. This will help elevate the importance of distributive justice issues.

**10**

**Ensure the SDGs serve the most vulnerable:** The 2030 Agenda specifically states that "no one will be left behind." This will require tailored approaches according to geography, demographics or other population indicators. Parliaments are well placed to ensure that the voices of under-represented and marginalized groups are heard. Parliaments could also convene more parliamentary debates and formal hearings focused on the rights and needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups. Parliaments can mandate the collection of disaggregated data to ensure that public policies are leaving no one behind.

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# Checklist for lawmakers

This checklist offers parliamentarians and parliamentary staff a tool to use when reviewing, debating, analyzing and presenting legislation, as well as for the review and oversight of national budgets. It is intended to serve as a guide to ensure that legislation and budget related parliamentary activities are conducted through an Agenda 2030 lens and can effectively contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

## LEGISLATION

### Representation: Engaging people around Agenda 2030

- Draft laws are published and shared to allow for public input.
- Communications strategies are developed to allow for the wide dissemination of draft laws.
- Civil society, academia and technical experts are able to present oral or written submissions on draft laws.
- Practices aimed specifically at including and consulting vulnerable and traditionally marginalized groups are undertaken.
- The public is engaged and consulted on the content of draft laws before it is considered in parliament.
- Sub-national governments are involved or consulted in the formulation of legislation, and specific contexts are addressed to ensure effective implementation.

### Mainstreaming the SDGs

- The explanatory memorandum attached to each draft law includes an explanation of how the draft law contributes to achieving the SDGs.
- An analysis of how draft laws align with the government's national development plan and/or a plan to localize SDGs is conducted.
- If applicable, a cost-benefit analysis to show the impact of the investment enabled by draft laws towards the fulfillment of the SDGs is performed.
- A socioeconomic, environmental and gender analysis of the law is conducted.
- Related international agreements and frameworks are considered in the drafting of legislation.
- Rules and procedures are considered to ensure that SDG implementation and achievement is part of each committee or responsible entity's mandate or scope of work.

### Post-legislative scrutiny (oversight of the implementation of laws)

- The entities responsible for providing oversight of the achievement of SDGs are identified, including the role and support they can provide to parliament.
- An internal needs assessment (on capacity, resources, and ability to effectively examine legislation) is conducted to ensure that the parliament, its committees or other responsible internal or external entities have adequate support and resources to analyze the implementation of laws.
- A plan to engage the public in monitoring the implementation of enacted legislation is in place.
- Responsible institutions present periodic reports to parliament.
- Relevance to the achievement of the SDGs is established as a criterion for the selection of enacted laws to prioritize by parliamentary committees or units responsible to scrutinize the implementation of laws.





# LEGISLATION

## Data, indicators and reporting

- The national statistics office has the resources to collect disaggregated data (by gender, age, geographical distribution and other relevant characteristics) necessary for effective monitoring of the SDGs.
- National indicators developed and/or identified to monitor progress of SDG achievement are known by the parliament and statistics are shared periodically with its members, as well as with the public.
- A plan is in place to share parliamentary actions, such as the adoption of legislation, within the Voluntary National Reviews to the High-Level Political Forum.

# BUDGET

## Representation

- Public input on budgetary priorities is collected by parliament and shared with the executive prior to its presentation of the budget proposal.
- A plan for public participation and engagement in the oversight of the budget is in place.
- Tools are used to seek feedback and ideas as the budget is debated in parliament to further expand the reach.

## Mainstreaming the SDGs

- The budget proposal is aligned with the national development plan.
- The budget submitted to parliament for review and enactment has an explanation of how budget measures seek to achieve progress in the implementation of the SDGs.
- Responsible committees assess how the budget will contribute to SDG achievement, and if any recommendations resulted they were implemented.
- The government was provided with the parliament's budget advice and recommendations that considered the budgets contribution to SDG achievement.

## Development effectiveness

- The Official Development Assistance (ODA) and other external financial resources are included in the annual budget as a form of revenue.
- Plans to complete impact assessments of aid received are in place.

## Accountability

- There is a plan or procedure in place to enable public accounts or budget committees to effectively oversee government officials and assess the effectiveness of government expenditures on SDG related issues and accountability for funds.
- A list of resources potential stakeholders and institutions that could be contact to help with the budget impact analysis on achieving the SDGs has been developed.

This checklist represents a summarized version of a more extensive SDG self-assessment for parliaments developed by UNDP and IPU. For more information and the full-length self-assessment, please consult the publication [Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals – A self-assessment toolkit](#).





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