

## IPU submission to the global consultations on the post-2015 sustainable development framework

### Rationale

Today's shortcomings in sustainable development can in large measure be ascribed to a lack of representation, participation, transparency, effective decision-making and oversight. Taken together, these values strike at the core of what is commonly referred to as "democratic governance", the marriage of democratic principles with sound and effective decision-making and implementation. Democratic governance is a critical enabler of sustainable development in all its manifestations (economic, social and environmental) and at all levels (national, regional and global).

The IPU therefore suggests that democratic principles, values and institutions should underpin the post-2015 development framework. This will help ensure the full involvement of parliaments in the comprehensive framework to implement the future sustainable development agenda and to attain its goals and targets.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union set forth its vision of democracy in the Universal Declaration on Democracy adopted in 1997 by the global parliamentary community.

The Declaration affirms that democracy is a universally recognized ideal and goal. It seeks to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice and to build sustainable development. It is inseparable from the rule of law and respect for human rights. Democracy, the Declaration continues, is also a mode of government. It is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs. It requires equality between men and women and their full participation in society. It requires well-functioning democratic institutions.

A fully representative Parliament that has the requisite powers and means to express the will of the people and that can legislate and hold government to account is a key institution of democracy.

Parliaments build national ownership of sustainable development policies. They hold policy debates and translate international development commitments and sustainable development policies into national legislation. They facilitate implementation of development plans and hold government to account through their oversight function. They hold the purse strings and provide funding for development through the national budget.

The centrality of democracy and its institutions to development is recognized by States in many international instruments and agreements. It is reflected in numerous conventions, resolutions and declarations of the United Nations. In the Millennium Declaration, Heads of State and government pledge support for democracy and democratic institutions, recognize the importance of democratic and participatory governance in ensuring freedoms, and underscore the importance of good governance to development and the eradication of poverty.

## Proposal

For all of these reasons, the IPU proposes that the new development framework contain a goal directly related to “democratic governance.” This should be a comprehensive goal that includes but is not limited to the capacities and functions of parliaments. As a universal goal to be applied to both developed and developing countries, it would have to strike a common denominator high enough to be meaningful to all but low enough to be reachable by all. It should be accompanied by a set of targets as well as qualitative and quantitative indicators to help track progress. Elements of democratic governance should also be integrated in all the other goals of the new development framework.

The new proposed governance goal could be formulated in global terms, but targets and indicators could be formulated to account for differences in regional and/or national contexts as well as different starting points (baselines).

The targets of a “democratic governance” goal could be formulated in functional, rather than institutional, terms. Such an approach may look at central features of democratic governance such as participation, transparency and accountability [see box for an illustration]. These targets would not focus on parliament alone, but would cut across other constituent elements of governance: representative institutions, public administration, state audit institutions, the rule of law and justice systems, civil society, media, anti-corruption bodies, etc.

The IPU is well placed to propose indicators to track how parliaments improve democratic governance. The IPU would work closely with parliaments as well as with the statistical community in developing qualitative and quantitative measures that are relevant to parliaments’ contribution towards achieving democratic governance. A repertory of indicators that are already available from authoritative sources could be compiled to assist in future discussions.

Parliamentary indicators would need to be simple to understand, based on ‘hard’ data from objectively verifiable sources, and as much as possible applicable to sustainable development processes and policies. Indicators that focus on results and development outcomes as opposed to processes should also be considered.

## Example of a functional approach to targets and indicators under a comprehensive democratic governance goal to be included in the new Sustainable Development Goals

Note: the bullet points represent examples of areas in which measurable indicators could be developed. This provisional selection, to be further elaborated, includes indicators that touch on various dimensions of governance as well as indicators that are specific to parliaments.

### Target 1: Participation for fair representation of interests and constituencies

- A national multi-stakeholder body is set up to plan for and oversee implementation
- Citizens / civil society groups are involved in planning and implementation
- Local ownership is developed through participatory planning processes
- Minority and indigenous communities are consulted
- Parliament participates in formulating the national development plan
- All citizens, including the poor, have access to justice systems
- Women participate in politics both as voters and as candidates

### Target 2: Transparency to improve trust in government and sound decision-making

- A national plan for implementation of the post-2015 framework is published
- The budget proposal is published in accessible language and national hearings with constituencies held
- Amount of money earmarked for SDG implementation is clearly identified
- Government procurement decisions and expenditures are widely advertised
- Public database of SDG implementation activities and results is maintained
- Financing sources of political parties are made public

### Target 3: Accountability to improve results and planning for development

- Private companies report to local communities for the environmental impact of their activities
- Parliament receives annual reports on SDG progress from government
- Ministers appear before parliamentary committees upon request
- Development cooperation from civil society organization is reported on the national budget
- The supreme audit body reports annually to parliament on budget execution
- National reports to the UN on implementation are scrutinized by parliament
- Online databases to track government activities, legislative mandates and corresponding expenditures are developed