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Toward a new development vision: the emerging global debate and IPU preparations

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to enlist your Parliament's support and involvement in the design of the international development framework that will be put in place in 2015.

As I am sure you are aware, the Millennium Development Goals are drawing to a close two years from now. As the international community makes a last push to reach the MDGs, it is also embarking on a course to chart a new set of Sustainable Development Goals.

The MDGs were largely a product of the United Nations and its member States and they did not include all dimensions of development. This time there is a determined effort to consult more widely and to consider all aspects of development. The IPU has defended the view that parliaments should be consulted and the UN General Assembly endorsed these sentiments last year when it formally encouraged the IPU to bring a parliamentary contribution to the design of the next generation of global development goals.

I believe you will agree that democratic principles, values and institutions should underpin the post-2015 development framework. Many of 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 IPU has set forth its own vision of democracy on many occasions. We affirm that democracy is a universally recognized ideal and goal that seeks to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice and to build sustainable development. Democracy is also a mode of government that is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs. In the view of the IPU, democracy requires equality between men and women and their full participation in society. It also requires well-functioning democratic institutions.

There is therefore no question in my mind that the IPU must defend the notion that democracy should be part of the new development framework in one form or another. At last year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) governments, made it clear that "to achieve our sustainable development goals we need institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic". I believe that it is precisely on this ground that the IPU position in the upcoming debate must begin to be built so that a clear commitment to democratic governance – both as a standalone goal and as a dimension of other goals - will be reflected in the new Sustainable Development Goals.

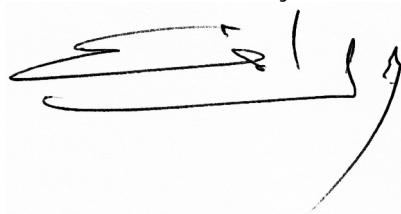
I very much hope that you will wish to support this proposal and to facilitate participation by your parliament in the consultations that are now underway. In order to facilitate your task, I enclose a Note that succinctly outlines the different processes that have been launched at the national, regional and global levels. I am currently in contact with the High-level Panel that has been set up by the United Nations Secretary-General, and the IPU is organizing a round table discussion with members of the panel at their next meeting in Monrovia at the end of this month. I enclose a Note containing our initial submission to these global consultations.

I encourage you to make sure that your parliament participates in the national and regional consultations that are taking place. I would also like to suggest that you consider taking part in some of the regional consultations, in particular the one that will take place in South Africa at the end of February to discuss governance and development.

I would be very grateful if you could keep the IPU Secretariat informed of any action you may take. This will help us better prepare for the 128th IPU Assembly in Quito which offers us an opportunity to formulate a more elaborate IPU contribution to the global consultations.

I am convinced that we have a unique opportunity to influence the new sustainable development goals and that by working together we can help ensure that democracy becomes part of the new international development framework. I believe this is fully in line with IPU's strategy which invites us to work together to advance democratic culture, values and institutions throughout the world.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abdelwahad Radi', with a long, sweeping underline that curves upwards to the right.

Abdelwahad Radi
President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

NOTE ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARLIAMENTS AND THE IPU TO CONTRIBUTE
TO CONSULTATIONS ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Parliamentary input at the global level

Leading the way in the global mobilization, a High Level Panel of some 27 eminent personalities was constituted last fall to advise the United Nations Secretary-General on the broad contours of the new development framework. The panel is chaired by the Presidents of Indonesia and of Liberia together with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. It will conclude with a major report in May that is expected to provide overall direction to intergovernmental negotiations later on. The IPU has been invited by the HLP to organize a special roundtable with a few members of parliament at an upcoming meeting of the HLP in Monrovia on 30 January. This will be a first important opportunity for the IPU to put forward a perspective on democratic governance and to gauge the ways in which it may be included in the final conclusions of the Panel.

A Working Group of some thirty member States will be set up within the United Nations General Assembly to begin to sketch out the new SDGs. The Working Group is to submit concrete proposals to the General Assembly in September, when a special High Level Meeting of heads of government will take place in New York. The meetings of the Working Group will be open thus offering opportunities for the IPU to follow closely the deliberations and to contribute to them on the basis of recommendations formulated by the IPU over the years.

There will be several regional and thematic consultations assisted by the United Nations in cooperation with parliaments, civil society, academia, and the private sector. At the regional level, three consultations with MPs and civil society were already organized, partly with IPU support, in Africa and Asia. Global level consultations are taking place around eleven thematic clusters that include one on governance.¹ The IPU is taking part in the governance cluster that will culminate with a major event in South Africa toward the end of February. The consultation aims to help define the specific components of governance that will be particularly important to the new development framework and formulate a measureable goal and corresponding targets. More information about all regional and thematic consultations, which for the most part will run to the end of March, can be found online at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/>.

An important opportunity for the IPU to engage in this global process will also come with our 128th Assembly in Quito (22-27 March). The main theme of the Assembly - From unrelenting growth to purposeful development "Buen Vivir": New approaches, new solutions – very clearly calls for a broad discussion about the very purpose of development and how this should be achieved. To facilitate this discussion, a few personalities and experts have been invited to deliver keynote addresses that will also focus on the linkages between development and democratic governance. The IPU will also conduct a survey of delegates on this topic during the five days of the Assembly and the results will be presented and discussed at a workshop on the last day.

This year's annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, in November, will examine the proposals that will have emerged and provide MPs with an opportunity to discuss them with government representatives and UN officials. While the overall parameters of the new development vision will likely have been set by the time the Hearing takes place, there is likely to remain quite a bit of negotiating flexibility with respect to the specific goals and particularly their targets and indicators.

¹ The full list of thematic consultations include: inequalities; health; education; growth and employment; environmental sustainability governance; conflict and fragility; population dynamics; hunger, food and nutrition security; energy and water.

Parliamentary input at the national level

The process leading up to the post-2015 development framework is also designed to gather the views of stakeholders from the ground up both institutionally and in their individual capacities. At the moment, broad-based national consultations are being organized in some 66 countries with the assistance of the United Nations, but many more countries may eventually be involved. Although each country is free to organize its own consultations (through a combination of hearings, local town hall meetings, workshops, citizens' surveys etc.), the idea of these exercises is to engage as many people as possible from all sectors of society. As a result of an explicit IPU request, the official guidelines for the national consultations now clearly identify parliament as a stakeholder to be consulted in every country. Parliaments are encouraged take part in one form or another in national consultations taking place in their country. More information on these consultations (including the official guidelines and contact details of the UN coordinator in each participating country) is available at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/sitemap>.

Participation in the consultations at both national and global levels will also be possible through an online interactive survey called My World. This survey asks respondents to select their top development priorities from a list of sixteen items that have been identified through a series of focus groups. Requiring only seconds to complete, the survey has been designed so that decision-makers and ordinary citizens at large can express their views immediately from wherever they are and through a variety of means (smart phone; SMS message; computer etc.). The opinions collected through My World will be channelled to the High Level Panel and the other processes outlined above.

It is suggested that the survey, which is available in many languages, be brought to the attention of all members of parliament. In practical terms, it should be possible to post the electronic link to the survey prominently on each parliament's website, circulate information about the survey to all members with an exhortation to participate, and encouraging them to promote the survey with their own constituents. The survey can be found online at <http://www.myworld2015.org/>.