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Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [74/304](#), the present report reflects on the interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). That interaction promises to provide a solid foundation for the advancement of common objectives across the spectrum of United Nations mandates and activities. The report, which is the sixth of its kind, provides an overview of critical areas in which the collaboration between the United Nations and parliaments has advanced shared objectives. More than two years on, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have profound global impacts. Parliaments and parliamentary alliances have proven to be vital partners in efforts to address the socioeconomic consequences of the pandemic, as well as its implications for human rights. They have played an active role in developing emergency legislation, enacting laws, refining national regulatory frameworks, approving public budgets and enhancing the accountability of Governments, including fulfilment of human rights obligations and political commitments.

2. The pandemic has reversed some of the hard-won gains in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The number of people living in extreme poverty has increased sharply, gender gaps in labour markets have widened, and income and wealth inequalities – both within and between countries – have risen. In this context, parliaments worldwide are playing an important role in helping Member States to scale up their responses and make up for setbacks in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. The General Assembly, in resolution [74/304](#), recognized the role played by national parliaments and IPU in the response to the pandemic and recovery efforts. The Assembly also recognized the role of the IPU Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs in providing a platform for regular interaction between parliamentarians and United Nations officials, including on advancing the 2030 Agenda.



4. The Secretary-General is committed to further strengthening the collaboration between the United Nations and parliaments. In his report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, which he presented on 10 September 2021, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of enhancing parliamentary inputs at the United Nations and recognized that, amid the multiple and overlapping crises, there is an opportunity to build a more effective multilateral system based on strengthened cooperation. The report is above all an agenda for action, designed to strengthen and accelerate multilateral cooperation and make a tangible difference to people’s lives. It is also an agenda driven by solidarity and the principle of working together. The Secretary-General recognizes that we are bound to each other and that no community or country, however powerful, can solve its challenges alone. Parliaments play a critical role in this regard, by helping to ensure that United Nations decision-making is informed by a wide range of views and opinions.

5. In resolution [74/304](#), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report with a special focus on the implementation of the shared global objectives of United Nations entities and IPU, including best practices and contributions of Member States, national parliaments, the United Nations and IPU to increase the representation of women in parliaments. The present report therefore provides information on the interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and IPU over the past two years, with a particular focus on achieving the 2030 Agenda and response and recovery efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as democracy and human rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women, including best practices for increasing the representation of women in parliament, youth empowerment and international peace and security. Section II provides information on the cooperation between the United Nations system and national parliaments. Section III details the collaboration between the United Nations system, IPU and other parliamentary organizations. Section IV focuses on partnerships and knowledge products developed as a result of the strong collaboration between the United Nations, parliaments and parliamentary organizations.

II. United Nations and national parliaments: direct support provided to parliaments and parliamentarians

A. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

6. The 2030 Agenda is at a critical juncture. It was already apparent before the pandemic that many Member States were struggling to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. COVID-19 compounded existing challenges, leading to an environment now characterized by low economic growth, high unemployment and rising inequality. A global recovery that puts the world on track to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals will require the participation of parliaments. Cooperation between the United Nations system and national parliaments is vital and has already led to important deliverables.

7. As national legislators, parliaments have a critical role to play in promoting investment in sustainable development and setting appropriate regulatory frameworks. Parliaments are responsible for creating an enabling legislative environment for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including by identifying reform priorities and drafting new legislation. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has frequently been called upon to brief regional or national parliaments on the recommendations contained in the *World Investment Report* and on issues such as perspectives on international investment agreements.

8. The global network of United Nations information centres, overseen by the Department of Global Communications, works directly with national parliaments and parliamentary groups to engage them on central United Nations agendas. The information centres also provide support to the United Nations resident coordinators in their engagement with parliamentarians through events relating to the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights.

9. With support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Asian Population and Development Association and the Forum of African and Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development committed to advancing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, which is in line with the 2030 Agenda.

10. In May 2020, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean held a webinar on the significance of the 2030 Agenda during the COVID-19 pandemic. Several global and regional actors participated in the webinar, including the Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Supreme Audit Institutions, ParlAmericas, the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament and the Central American Parliament.

11. In Bangladesh, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) worked with the Government to develop the My Constituency app, a user-friendly online tool to track progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in each constituency. The app enables Members of Parliament to understand gaps and needs and to make evidence-based arguments for policies and resources.

12. In Kosovo,¹ the United Nations worked in close partnership with the Assembly of Kosovo to advance the 2030 Agenda and raise public awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Development Coordination Office and UNDP provided technical support to the Assembly's Sustainable Development Council on the establishment of a Sustainable Development Goal dashboard to monitor progress.

B. Coronavirus disease pandemic

13. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP supported digitalization initiatives to enable many parliaments to continue conducting their proceedings online. For example, UNDP supported the Congress of the Federated States of Micronesia to boost its digital capacity, including to improve citizen interaction. In Nepal, the Women and Social Committee of the Federal Parliament, with the support of UNDP, held expert consultations on the COVID-19 response, with a focus on those at risk of being left behind, including women, children and senior citizens. In Bangladesh, UNDP facilitated the participation of the Speaker of Parliament and a senior Member of Parliament in global vaccine round tables that highlighted the importance of equitable national vaccine access.

14. In order to support gender mainstreaming in parliamentary responses to the pandemic, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) issued *A primer for parliamentary action: gender-sensitive responses to COVID-19*, which outlines practical strategies for parliaments to promote gender-sensitive COVID-19 response and recovery. In the Republic of Moldova, UN-Women, UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the engagement of the women's parliamentary caucus with over 300 women leaders and health and education professionals to learn first-hand about

¹ References to Kosovo shall be understood to be in the context of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

the socioeconomic challenges caused or exacerbated by the pandemic, and how they affect women and the most vulnerable in society.

15. At a virtual meeting of parliamentarians from Latin America and the Caribbean held in June 2020, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean stressed the importance of more efficient and open legislative bodies to tackle the pandemic. The meeting, entitled “Legislating for post-COVID-19 economic recovery: cooperative dialogue between presiding officers of parliaments of the Americas”, was convened by ParlAmericas and was attended by 15 parliamentary speakers and vice-speakers from across the region.

16. In 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, in partnership with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, held a series of virtual parliamentary dialogues on food security and nutrition in times of COVID-19, promoting the exchange of knowledge among parliamentarians from 50 countries and nine regional and subregional parliamentary networks.

C. Democracy and human rights

17. In order to empower parliaments, civil society, the judiciary and the private sector, UNDP launched the Inclusive Governance Initiative in Angola, Côte d’Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe. This regional initiative seeks to support countries in Africa in becoming increasingly accountable to, and inclusive of, their entire populations, including sexual and gender minorities.

18. In Brazil, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) supported the establishment of a parliamentary observatory on the universal periodic review, a pioneering initiative led by the Chamber of Deputies. In 2021, the initiative engaged 108 state representatives and 145 civil society representatives to discuss progress made on the implementation of recommendations accepted by Brazil during the third cycle of the universal periodic review in 2017.

19. In the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) supported the National Assembly and provided its committees with technical expertise during the adoption of draft bills related to security sector reform, decentralization, legal aid and elections. MINUSCA facilitated 30 field visits of parliamentarians to their constituencies; the visits promoted dialogue and built trust among communities, thereby contributing to the further implementation of the 2019 Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic. In September 2020, MINUSCA provided its good offices and technical support to the National Electoral Authority and to parliamentarians for a revision of the electoral code to allow the voter registration period to be legally extended while remaining within constitutional deadlines.

20. In Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) engaged with the parliamentary legal committee and provided advice on the technical annexes to the electoral law, the operational electoral plan and the electoral timeline. UNAMI engaged regularly with the Council of Representatives to advocate compliance of national legislation with international human rights norms and standards, including the draft bills on torture and domestic violence and the Yazidi Female Survivors Act. As part of its Iraqi youth project, UNAMI connected select parliamentarians with young activists to discuss concerns relating to local and national issues. In accordance with its gender mainstreaming mandate, the leadership of UNAMI engages with female candidates and parliamentarians to support the political and electoral participation of women.

21. The United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon conducted regular political liaison and advocacy with the Speaker and Members of Parliament, urging institutional functioning in line with the separation of powers, the oversight role of Parliament, and transparency and accountability vis-à-vis citizens. Against the backdrop of a socioeconomic crisis in the country, the United Nations is working with Parliament to promote tangible reforms and legislation aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

22. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), together with UNDP, continued to provide advisory and technical support to the three institutions mandated to advance the constitutional review process in Somalia (the Ministry of Constitutional Affairs, the Oversight Committee of the Federal Parliament and the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission), until the constitutional review process was deferred to the new parliament by presidential decree on 24 December 2020.

D. Gender equality and the empowerment of women, including best practices for increasing the participation of women in parliament

23. Within the framework of the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights, a task team on temporary special measures was established, bringing together key actors to produce targeted advocacy messages on quotas and the political participation of women. The task team helped to produce key messages on temporary special measures, which were disseminated widely to United Nations field offices, and provided tailored advocacy support and advice to resident coordinators and national stakeholders.

24. UN-Women is supporting advocacy efforts with parliaments to adopt, reform or enforce the implementation of quota laws to improve women's representation. In Burkina Faso, UN-Women, UNDP and civil society partners provided technical assistance to parliamentarians during discussions leading to the adoption of a new quota law to promote women's political participation.

25. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the South Sudan Women Peace Monitoring and Advocacy Group held a capacity-building workshop for 45 young women parliamentarians under the age of 40 to enhance their ability to engage in meaningful leadership within national and state legislatures and to play a greater role in the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the community level.

26. In an effort to promote gender-responsive parliaments, UN-Women provided technical support and capacity-building to women's parliamentary caucuses working for gender equality and the empowerment of women. In Indonesia, for example, UN-Women convened a series of consultations bringing together the caucus, civil society organizations, women activists and academics. The consultations helped the groups to come up with a shared agenda to advance gender equality, including supporting priority bills under consideration. In Zimbabwe, the successful advocacy efforts of UN-Women with male members of parliament led to the establishment of the HeforShe campaign group of parliamentarians, which includes the Speaker of Parliament and senators.

27. In October 2020, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) convened consultative meetings of women parliamentarians to prepare specific gender-sensitive recommendations for the United Nations-facilitated Libyan Political Dialogue Forum. UNSMIL engaged with women parliamentarians and the Presidency of the House of Representatives to ensure the active and meaningful inclusion of women in all key political processes and forums, including in relevant committees,

and in work on subjects such as the empowerment of women and elections. In December 2021, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region facilitated engagement between the Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Ombudsman and Mediators Association and civil society organizations to support countries of the region in addressing gender-based violence and promoting the effective participation of women in political processes and decision-making.

28. In Georgia, in coordination with the International Labour Organization, UN-Women provided technical assistance during parliamentary discussions on amendments to the Labour Code and the Law on Public Service. This contributed to the inclusion of legal provisions on the principle of equal pay for equal work, employers' liability for discriminatory practices and sexual harassment, and the right to professional development and vocational training after maternity leave. In South Africa, UN-Women, UNFPA, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, OHCHR and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) supported the Parliamentary Forum of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in developing regional model legislation on gender-based violence. This has helped to strengthen normative standards that States members of SADC may seek to replicate at the domestic level.

29. In Angola, UNDP supported the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting to parliamentarians to ensure that women's needs are taken into consideration. Gender markers and a standard methodology are now used to factor in gender equality concerns to resource allocation underpinning implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In Kyrgyzstan, where an increase in gender-based violence in connection with the pandemic has been reported, UNDP has supported the parliament in developing a gender-sensitive crisis response and emergency measures. These included the creation of a council on women's rights and combating violence, which has reviewed and recommended legislative changes to promote access to justice for victims of domestic violence. In Montenegro, UNDP facilitated a knowledge and perception assessment on women, peace and security among parliamentarians, key ministries, the police and civil society. The assessment paved the way for the development of a national action plan to implement Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#).

30. In Turkmenistan, UNFPA supported the development of a model law on domestic violence. In Nigeria, it supported the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act and the Child's Rights Act.

E. Youth empowerment

31. Young people play a vital role in achieving the 2030 Agenda and are increasingly active agents within parliaments. They may also be well placed within national institutions to monitor and hold Governments accountable for achieving youth-related targets and commitments and the broader Sustainable Development Goals.

32. In April 2021, the annual Economic and Social Council youth forum took place in New York. The forum serves as an important platform for young people to contribute to policy discussions at the United Nations. Convened by the President of the Council and co-hosted by the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the 2021 forum included a ministerial round table on the political participation of young people in the context of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

33. In April 2021, the Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth delivered the keynote speech at the seventh Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, organized by IPU, the theme of which was “Post-COVID-19 recovery: a youth-responsive approach”.

34. In 2021, UNSOM delivered three workshop modules on youth, peace and security to the parliamentary committees of the Interior and Security in Hirshabelle, South-West State, and Jubbaland.

35. To enhance digital engagement between parliaments, Governments and young people in Bhutan, Pakistan and Timor-Leste, UNDP launched an initiative that supports digital readiness assessments of parliaments by piloting digital platforms for crowdsourcing youth input into the decision-making process.

36. In East and Southern Africa, UNFPA conducted online meetings, led by young people, with the speakers of six parliaments with a view to securing commitments on reforming laws concerning adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights.

F. International peace and security

37. Engagement with parliamentarians is an important aspect of United Nations support for the implementation of peace agreements. Throughout 2020 and 2021, UNSMIL continued to provide support to and engage with the House of Representatives in the context of the Libyan political dialogue process. In a period of heightened political polarization during and following armed conflict from April 2019 to June 2020, UNSMIL engaged with parliamentarians convened in eastern and western Libya as part of efforts to end hostilities and resume the political process. The leadership of UNSMIL regularly engaged with the leadership and members of the House of Representatives to discuss the political process and preparations for elections.

38. The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has monitored congressional discussions on peace-related matters. It has also maintained a continuous dialogue with lawmakers from parties across the political spectrum, members of the peace committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and the presidents of both chambers.

39. In June 2021, the Office of Counter-Terrorism established the Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism in Doha. Given that the pandemic directly affected the ability of the Programme Office to carry out in-person activities for parliamentarians, the Office of Counter-Terrorism redirected the focus of the new office towards the production of action-oriented tools and resources and other relevant materials customized for the use of parliamentarians.

40. In September 2021, the Office of Counter-Terrorism, in cooperation with UNODC and IPU, held the first Global Parliamentary Summit on Counter-Terrorism in Vienna. In December 2021, the Office of Counter-Terrorism co-organized an event on the role of parliamentarians in the implementation of national action plans for addressing terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism, in partnership with the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. The round table was held in the framework of the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism in Asia programme, a joint partnership between the European Union and the United Nations, and the Joint Plan of Action for the Implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, a joint project of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia.

41. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has a dedicated legislative assistance programme available to all parliaments, covering various aspects of international law, including nuclear safety, security, safeguards and liability, and supporting the development of national implementing legislation. During the reporting period, there was increased interest in IAEA legislative assistance activities, including regional and national training workshops on nuclear law and bilateral discussions on draft national nuclear legislation submitted for IAEA review. In September 2021, the IAEA Director General welcomed some 60 parliamentary speakers and heads of delegations to the IAEA headquarters on the margins of the fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

G. Other areas of collaboration

42. Through its Global Programme on Cybercrime, UNODC provided Member States and parliaments with technical assistance on cybercrime laws and cybersecurity strategies. In Fiji, UNODC and OHCHR provided advice on a draft cybercrime bill, which UNODC presented to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights in June 2020. UNODC also provided assistance and advice to Mongolia regarding its draft national cybersecurity strategy and criminal code on cybercrime in June 2021. Between November 2020 and October 2021, UNODC provided technical inputs to parliamentarians, legislative staff and other stakeholders in El Salvador, in the framework of multiparty sessions that analysed reforms to the country's cybercrime law.

43. In June 2021, UNODC supported the preparations for the twelfth meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on the Prevention of Corruption, preparing a report on the role of national parliaments and other legislative bodies in strengthening the implementation of the Convention against Corruption. The report suggested ways to involve national parliaments and other legislative bodies in the implementation of the Convention.

44. In Nepal and Pakistan, UNDP supported the adoption of guidelines on raising and monitoring climate financing. In Kosovo, parliamentarians participated in a side event on innovations for climate-smart cities organized by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to coincide with the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

45. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction engaged closely with Members of the European Parliament to advance disaster risk reduction legislation at the European Union level. Achievements included the integration of disaster risk reduction language and a reference to the Sendai Framework in the European Parliament's resolution on the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties and in the European Union's climate change adaptation strategy.

46. In the Republic of Korea, UNICEF held several pivotal engagements with parliamentarians in 2021. These included policy dialogues and climate discussions, and a briefing between the Executive Director of UNICEF and the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan. The leader of the Korean Parliamentary Friends of UNICEF, a group of 43 parliamentarians actively supporting the work of UNICEF, signed the Declaration on Children, Youth and Climate Action.

47. In Bangladesh, in 2021, UNODC engaged with the parliamentarians caucus on development and migration and held a meeting to exchange good practices on the response to trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. UNODC also presented a position paper entitled "Towards a national response to the smuggling of migrants

by land, sea and air in Bangladesh” to the caucus during the first high-level national consultation on the need for a migrant smuggling policy and national legislative response.

III. United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and other parliamentary organizations: advancing global norms

48. As the world organization of national parliaments, IPU has played a significant role in enhancing parliamentary contributions in the United Nations system. Section III highlights some of the major engagements between IPU and other parliamentary organizations and the United Nations.

A. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

49. As part of a multi-partner initiative coordinated by IPU, UNDP developed a set of indicators measuring parliamentary fitness for purpose, based on Sustainable Development Goal 16, targets 16.6 and 16.7. The indicators captured parliamentary good practice on oversight of the 2030 Agenda; gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting; human rights; parliamentary and inter-parliamentary cooperation; and oversight of the security sector, foreign affairs and international cooperation policy.

50. As part of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, UNDP and IPU have worked with parliaments, Governments, bilateral and multilateral organizations, civil society, the private sector and trade unions to strengthen the effectiveness of partnerships for the 2030 Agenda. In 2021, UNDP and IPU jointly hosted an expert talk on parliamentary good practices in building effective partnerships at the country level.

51. Over the past two years, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has partnered with IPU, UNDP and the Islamic Development Bank in organizing an annual forum with parliamentarians from Arab States to strengthen their engagement in the implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. In 2021, the focus was on the role of parliamentarians in responding to the COVID-19 crisis and advancing the agenda of leaving no one behind.

52. UNCTAD and IPU maintained close cooperation, including ensuring the dissemination of research and policy work on investment and enterprise for development and good practices developed by UNCTAD. IPU has been a regular partner in the World Investment Forum, with the IPU President participating in the opening summit of the seventh World Investment Forum, held in October 2021. The summit featured a tripartite dialogue of parliamentarians, policymakers and business leaders to discuss channelling investment for development.

53. In 2020, IPU partnered with the United Nations country team in Albania to support the Parliament of Albania as it strengthens its engagement on the Sustainable Development Goals. The project consisted of two initial activities to enhance parliamentarians’ knowledge of the process of implementing the Goals and to prepare parliamentary staff for the self-assessment exercise, based on the self-assessment toolkit produced by IPU and UNDP.

54. Following expressions of interest received from several parliaments, the United Nations Environment Programme and IPU held capacity-building workshops for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in Seychelles and Zimbabwe and a regional seminar for central Asian parliaments. The objective was to provide an understanding of parliamentarians’ role in promoting a green COVID-19 recovery and to enhance

their capacity to legislate, exercise their oversight functions and make budgetary decisions accordingly. The workshops also helped to identify how parliamentary staff can support parliamentarians in strengthening legislation for a green recovery and equip them with tools for incorporating the Sustainable Development Goals and green recovery principles in research and legislative analysis.

B. Coronavirus disease pandemic

55. The World Health Organization (WHO) and IPU organized a series of joint activities in 2020 and 2021, including a global virtual workshop on the linkages between universal health coverage and global health security, and the impact of the pandemic on parliamentary action in this area. WHO and IPU also held a series of regional events to highlight the importance of parliamentary functions in the response to COVID-19 and in ensuring equity as part of national universal health coverage agendas.

56. In 2020, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, IPU and WHO held two webinars as part of the IPU campaign entitled “Parliaments in a time of pandemic”. The webinars focused on mobilizing parliamentarians in the global response to COVID-19 and highlighted the need for whole-of-society and whole-of-government approaches. The WHO Director-General, the IPU Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction participated in the webinars.

57. In 2020, in the framework of the fifteenth annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and IPU co-organized a parliamentary round table on building trust in a time of COVID-19 response and post-COVID-19 recovery. The round-table discussions highlighted the role of parliaments in creating legal frameworks that make the Internet accessible, open and safe for current and future generations of users.

58. In 2021, OHCHR and IPU organized a workshop for parliamentarians on COVID-19 recovery through a human rights lens. The workshop allowed for the sharing of good practices in terms of legislation to promote human rights while tackling the pandemic. Participants also discussed human rights-based strategies for post-pandemic recovery.

C. Democracy and human rights

59. In 2020 and 2021, IPU continued to provide capacity-building assistance to support parliamentary efforts to promote human rights in general, and to enhance the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and the universal periodic review. In July and November 2020, OHCHR, IPU and the Commonwealth organized two virtual workshops on engaging parliaments in the promotion of human rights, including on the work of the Human Rights Council and the universal periodic review, for parliamentarians from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, Canada, and Asia and the Pacific.

60. In collaboration with OHCHR, the International Organization of la Francophonie (IOF) and the Parliamentary Assembly of la Francophonie, in October 2021, IPU held a workshop on strengthening the role of parliamentarians in the States members of IOF in the universal periodic review process.

D. Gender equality and the empowerment of women, including best practices for increasing the participation of women in parliaments

61. IPU and UN-Women held parliamentary meetings on the margins of the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women. The meetings provided a forum for parliamentarians to contribute to the topics under discussion during the sessions, including parliamentary action to achieve gender equality for all women and girls and challenges for achieving gender parity in political participation in a post-pandemic world.

62. UN-Women continued to partner with IPU to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in parliaments, including by providing global comparative data and knowledge and by convening regular events to strengthen the links between parliamentarians and the work of the United Nations. In 2020 and 2021, on the margins of the sixty-fourth and sixty-fifth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN-Women and IPU published the Map of Women in Politics. UN-Women, IPU, UNDP and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance continued to collaborate on the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, a platform which facilitates women's access to resources and capacity-building materials and provides elected women, candidates and women's civil society groups with an online space to share experiences, network and collaborate on issues of interest.

63. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and IPU signed a framework of cooperation and launched model legislative provisions and guidance on the investigation and prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence in June 2021. The Special Representative also named the Secretary-General of IPU as a global champion for the fight against sexual violence in conflict, in recognition of his important work in the promotion of gender equality and his support for the mandate of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict through the framework of cooperation.

E. Youth empowerment

64. IPU, through its office in New York, worked with Member States to strengthen the draft resolution of the General Assembly on policies and programmes involving youth, by placing greater emphasis on the representation of young people in national and local legislatures.

65. UNODC supported the participation of the Africa Young Parliamentarians Network in the Global Youth Leadership Forum held in Santander, Spain, in 2021. The forum provided a platform for young parliamentarians to interact and collaborate with their counterparts from other parts of the world on pertinent legislative issues around good governance, justice, human rights and youth leadership. In East Africa, UNODC has been supporting and working with the Africa Young Parliamentarians Network to enhance the role of young African legislators in combating corruption and promoting the rule of law. In December 2020, UNODC partnered with the Network to commemorate International Anti-Corruption Day.

F. International peace and security

66. As part of the IPU-United Nations Joint Programme on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, which is intended to strengthen the capacity of national parliaments in countering terrorism and violent extremism, IPU, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and UNODC worked on the development of model legislative

provisions in support of victims of terrorism. Eight expert webinars took place between November 2020 and June 2021 to collect the different provisions that could be part of the draft model legislative provisions, which are intended to serve as a guide when legislation on the matter does not exist or needs revisions.

67. In September 2021, the IAEA Director General and the IPU Secretary-General sent joint letters to the speakers of parliaments of the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that have yet to conclude and bring into force the relevant safeguards agreements. The letters requested the speakers' support in raising awareness of the comprehensive safeguards agreements and the additional protocols among parliamentarians to help generate support for nuclear non-proliferation underpinned by the Treaty.

68. In February 2021, in partnership with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, UNDP hosted a virtual discussion on the multidimensional relationship between parliaments and peacebuilding. In addition, at the request of the Chair of the IPU Sub-Committee on Finance, UNDP contributed in 2021 to the drafting of an IPU resolution on the role of parliaments and parliamentarians in building and sustaining peace.

69. IPU, together with the presidency of the seventh Conference of State Parties to the Arms Trade Treaty, carried out an outreach campaign to the speakers of parliament of over 80 States that are not yet party to the Treaty, to encourage adhesion and raise awareness of the danger posed by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. IPU also continued its outreach campaign to the speakers of parliament of States that are not yet parties to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, urging them to discuss adhesion to the treaty in their respective parliaments.

70. IPU, with the support of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, continued to promote implementation of the 2018 Agenda for Disarmament by organizing international webinars on the basis of the 2020 parliamentary handbook entitled "Assuring our common future: a guide to parliamentary action in support of disarmament for security and sustainable development".

G. Other areas of collaboration

71. In the political declaration entitled "Our common commitment to effectively addressing challenges and implementing measures to prevent and combat corruption and strengthen international cooperation", adopted at the special session of the General Assembly against corruption in June 2021, Member States committed to strengthening interparliamentary dialogue and cooperation, including in coordination with IPU, to promote the exchange of good practices relating to legislation, review and oversight controls in the fight against corruption, and to considering implementing such good practices in domestic law. UNODC and the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption held a joint side event on the margins of the special session on the role of parliamentarians in implementing the political declaration.

72. In December 2021, at the ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, held in Egypt, UNODC held a special event on the role of national parliaments and other legislative bodies in preventing and countering corruption. Representatives of IPU, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and members of national parliaments provided an account of their efforts to promote the implementation of the Convention at the national, regional and global levels. Also during the session, the Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption held an event entitled "Ninth Forum of Parliamentarians: Implementing Integrity".

73. In 2020 and 2021, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and IPU joined efforts in facilitating inter-parliamentary dialogue on Internet and digital policy issues in the context of the Internet Governance Forum. The parliamentary round table at the fifteenth Internet Governance Forum in November 2020 led to an outcome document that highlighted the commitment of parliamentarians to actively contributing to the creation of legal frameworks for current and future generations of Internet users and to making the Internet accessible, open and safe for everyone. In 2021, a strengthened parliamentary track in the Internet Governance Forum resulted in a series of recommendations for parliamentary action on key digital policy issues: privacy and data protection, harmful online content, and the governance of artificial intelligence.

74. IPU and the Italian Parliament co-organized a parliamentary meeting in advance of the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Rome in October 2021, as part of a series of preparatory events hosted by Italy. This was followed by a parliamentary meeting on the margins of the twenty-sixth session in Glasgow, co-organized by IPU and the British Group of IPU.

IV. Partnerships

A. Partnerships, senior-level interactions and specialized meetings

75. Efforts to enhance the interactions between the United Nations and IPU have been undertaken at the highest level, allowing an open channel between the leadership of both organizations, including the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General and the President of IPU.

76. In 2021, IPU held the fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. The Conference, held in Vienna, brought together the most senior parliamentary leadership from over 100 parliaments and representatives from the United Nations, who focused on enhancing effective multilateralism to deliver peace and sustainable development for people and the planet.

77. The Secretary-General of the United Nations sent video messages to the 142nd and 143rd IPU Assemblies and to the fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, in which he highlighted the need to recommit to multilateralism and engage parliamentarians in solving issues of global importance. In Our Common Agenda, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of enhancing parliamentary inputs to the United Nations system. The Deputy Secretary-General sent a video message to the first Global Parliamentary Meeting on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, held in 2021, in which she reinforced the critical role of parliamentarians in achieving the 2030 Agenda.

78. The annual United Nations-IPU parliamentary hearings held in 2021 and 2022 offered important opportunities to discuss parliamentary inputs to the United Nations system. The 2021 hearing, held virtually, focused on combating corruption to restore trust in government and improve development prospects. The 2022 hearing, the theme of which was “Building political support and inclusive responses to sustainable recovery”, served as an opportunity for a preliminary exchange of views regarding the implementation of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in Our Common Agenda. The Department of Global Communications highlighted the work of IPU and parliamentary multilateralism across its multilingual news platforms.

79. In June 2021, OHCHR and IPU signed a memorandum of understanding with a view to increasing mutual coordination and cooperation on human rights, including

on the right to participate in public affairs and increased support to specialized human rights committees within parliaments.

80. In February 2020, the Office of Counter-Terrorism and the Shura Council of Qatar signed a memorandum of understanding on delivering joint initiatives to promote the active engagement of parliamentarians from across the world in countering terrorism and violent extremism conducive to terrorism. The Contribution Agreement to establish the Office of Counter-Terrorism Programme Office on Parliamentary Engagement in Preventing and Countering Terrorism in Doha was finalized in November 2020.

81. On the margins of the first Global Parliamentary Summit on Counter-Terrorism, co-organized by the Office of Counter-Terrorism, UNODC and IPU on 9 September 2021 in Vienna, UNODC signed letters of intent with the Arab Parliament and IPU on expanding future cooperation on legislative assistance to parliamentarians in the Middle East and North Africa. Similarly, in November 2021, UNODC signed a memorandum of understanding with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean to deepen cooperation on legislation harmonization, to better address the links between organized crime and terrorism.

82. In June 2021, IPU signed a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that institutionalized the long-standing cooperation between the two organizations on issues related to refugee protection and statelessness. IPU and UNHCR organized a series of awareness-raising events targeting Members of Parliament on the implementation of the global compact on refugees and the global campaign to end statelessness within a decade (I Belong campaign).

B. Development of tools and knowledge products

83. The wide-ranging cooperation between the United Nations, parliaments and parliamentary organizations has resulted in the development of a number of tools and knowledge products. UNDP and IPU have published several guidance tools and knowledge products, including the third *Global Parliamentary Report*, a flagship joint production of UNDP and IPU that provides a guide for parliaments to enhance, systematize and innovate their public engagement. Other publications include the *Guidelines for enhancing the engagement and contribution of parliaments to effective development cooperation*, published in 2020, which seeks to provide parliaments and parliamentarians with a common understanding of what they can do to promote more effective and accountable use of aid and development resources.

84. In 2020 and 2021, IPU and WHO collaborated on the development of tools to inform parliamentary action, including a joint handbook for parliamentarians explaining the concept of universal health coverage and its importance for national development, which will be published in 2022. The handbook highlights the significance of parliamentary action on this issue, discusses how parliaments and parliamentarians can address key universal health care challenges, and provides suggestions of concrete action and initiatives to take at the national level.

85. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction developed a new strategy for engagement with parliamentarians, which includes a shift towards a more institutionalized approach to engagement with a strategic network of partners, such as IPU, the Climate Vulnerable Forum and regional parliamentary groups and networks. Furthermore, in October 2021, in connection with the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction, IPU and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction released a toolkit entitled “Disaster risk reduction to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals”, which explains the importance of disaster risk

reduction and how to implement it and sets out 10 actions that parliamentarians can take to effectively influence and implement relevant policy, legal, financial and oversight frameworks adapted to their country's context.

86. In April 2021, IPU and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations released a handbook for parliamentarians on food systems and nutrition. The handbook was produced in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF, the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and the New Partnership for Africa's Development. It is intended to support parliamentary engagement in ensuring that the necessary legislation on food security and nutrition is put in place and in identifying concrete actions to achieve food security and good nutrition for all.

87. UNFPA supported the development of several knowledge products for parliamentarians, including a toolkit entitled "Parliamentarian guide: 6 action steps to achieve universal health coverage". The toolkit, published in 2021, was developed by the International Health Partnership for Universal Health Coverage, the European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights and the African Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development. UNFPA, in partnership with the European Parliamentary Forum, also supported the development of the Global Contraception Policy Atlas Africa.

88. In 2020, IPU and the United Nations Environment Programme released a joint publication entitled *Green approaches to COVID-19 recovery: Policy note for parliamentarians*. The policy note highlights key approaches that parliamentarians can take to promote a sustainable and green recovery in the wake of the pandemic and shares corresponding best practices.

89. IPU and OHCHR worked together to produce a self-assessment toolkit for parliaments aimed at increasing parliamentarians' awareness of international and regional human rights norms and mechanisms; empowering parliamentary bodies to play a proactive role; and promoting cooperation between parliaments and international human rights mechanisms. IPU and OHCHR are also working on a handbook for parliamentarians on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol thereto. OHCHR and IPU collaborated to produce advice for parliamentarians on engagement with the universal periodic review of the Human Rights Council. In 2021, at the 143rd IPU Assembly and also virtually, IPU and UN-Women launched the *Handbook for parliamentarians on gender-responsive law-making*.

90. In October 2021, the Office of Counter-Terrorism launched an online platform and training tool called Connect & Learn, which offers an opportunity to support parliamentarians and Member States in implementing all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and relevant Security Council resolutions.

V. Conclusion and way forward

91. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals; the pandemic has made their achievement significantly more challenging. Parliaments, as fundamental custodians of political commitments on sustainable development, continue to play an essential role in the implementation and review of the 2030 Agenda, as reiterated in 2021 by the General Assembly in its review of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development.² The experience of the

² General Assembly resolution 75/290 B.

United Nations with parliaments and parliamentary alliances, as set forth in this report, demonstrates that their work, and their partnership with the United Nations, is critical.

92. In my report entitled “Our Common Agenda”, I stressed the importance of enhancing parliamentary inputs to the United Nations system and of addressing some of the gaps and challenges that hinder furthering the collaboration between parliaments and the United Nations system, at the global, regional and national levels. Parliaments, given their legislative and oversight mandates and their role in translating international instruments into national legislation, can make a unique contribution to United Nations processes. I am committed to working with Member States to explore ways in which the inputs of parliaments to United Nations processes can be enhanced.

93. With women representing only 25.6 per cent of the world’s parliamentarians, concrete and bold legislative action is urgently needed to reach gender parity in decision-making. I welcome the decision of a number of Member States to introduce temporary special measures, including gender quotas in parliaments, which has proved to be an effective way to deliver on our commitment to promote the equal, meaningful and effective political participation of women. Yet work related to gender equality and the empowerment of women remains de-prioritized in legislative and policy agendas, and political will to engage towards making substantive progress is lacking. I call for further political resolve to overcome these gaps.

94. Expanded opportunities for young people to serve as parliamentarians should be encouraged. Concrete efforts should be advanced to create and maintain safe spaces and channels for young people to be meaningfully and inclusively engaged at all levels of policymaking. Parliamentary hearings with groups of young people could be promoted when policies are being discussed in national legislative bodies.

95. Given the important role played by parliaments in translating global agendas into concrete realities at the national level, the following recommendations are submitted for consideration:

(a) In line with the recommendations contained in Our Common Agenda, Member States could consider including parliamentarians in national delegations to participate in United Nations activities. I also call upon United Nations governing bodies to consider ways in which they can enhance the participation of parliamentarians in their own proceedings, with a view to hearing a diverse set of voices and inputs;

(b) The United Nations system and IPU will continue developing structured interactions with national parliaments to help bring a parliamentary perspective to the work of the United Nations, ensure the priorities set in national budgets advance the implementation of global frameworks, and align national legislation with international commitments, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the New Urban Agenda. I welcome in this regard the work of IPU to facilitate the participation of parliamentarians in United Nations processes;

(c) As the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals progresses, United Nations entities will continue supporting parliaments to deliver on that crucial agenda, building on the reconfigured United Nations

country teams and ensuring coherence of action and cross-pillar coordination. In the process, United Nations entities should avail themselves more systematically of the unique expertise of IPU and its member parliaments, as called for by the General Assembly in resolution 74/304;

(d) National parliaments should continue to strengthen their role in the promotion and protection of human rights, including in their oversight of Governments' human rights actions and policies, and their involvement in the international human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies, the special procedures and the universal periodic review. The setting up or strengthening of parliamentary human rights committees could be considered in this regard. Guidance may be drawn from the OHCHR report on the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council and its universal periodic review, in particular annex I, which sets out draft principles on parliaments and human rights;³

(e) National parliaments should strengthen their institutional capacity to deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment, and to become more gender-sensitive institutions. Parliaments should continue to work to review norms and legislation with a view to achieving gender equality. This should include reforming, amending or repealing existing discriminatory laws, as recommended in the Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights;

(f) Despite the disturbing levels of violence against women parliamentarians reported by IPU, many parliaments still lack sexual harassment policies for parliamentarians and staff. National parliaments could promote, adopt and effectively enforce codes of conduct, institutional protocols, and monitoring and reporting mechanisms, with zero tolerance for any form of violence against women in politics;

(g) IPU and national parliaments could consider urgent parliamentary action to mitigate the effects of climate change and to implement the Paris Agreement. It is important for parliaments to ensure that the needs of the most at-risk members of the population, including women and young people, are addressed as part of climate action;

(h) In the wake of shrinking fiscal space due to the economic impact of COVID-19, the United Nations will further strengthen and reinvigorate its engagement with parliamentarians to help uphold commitments on official development assistance, deliver debt relief, guide domestic resource mobilization and financing, and promote accountability that will safeguard the health, rights and well-being of those left furthest behind, in particular women and adolescent girls and persons with disabilities.

96. As encouraged by the General Assembly, cooperation between the United Nations system, parliamentary organizations and national parliaments has expanded over the past two years, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. I urge the international community to enhance the engagement of national parliaments and parliamentary organizations in order to help retain or regain the hard-won achievements towards the 2030 Agenda, some of which have been reversed by the pandemic. I also urge parliamentary stakeholders to work with the United Nations system in addressing the recommendation contained in Our Common Agenda to enhance parliamentary inputs at the United Nations.

³ A/HRC/38/25.