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# Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals

**A self-  
assessment  
toolkit**

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# Introduction

*We acknowledge also 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. ... “We the peoples” are the celebrated opening words of the Charter of the United Nations. It is “we the peoples” who are embarking today on the road to 2030. Our journey will involve governments as well as parliaments, the United Nations system and other international institutions, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, business and the private sector, the scientific and academic community – and all people.*

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development  
New York, 25 September 2015

The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* is a ground-breaking global commitment to end poverty and set the world on a sustainable path to inclusive development. It was endorsed by government leaders at a United Nations summit in September 2015. A set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 actionable targets lies at the core of this ambitious agenda.

The SDGs are intended to focus and coordinate national policies towards a common vision for humanity. The SDGs build on past efforts to implement the poverty reduction agenda known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They aspire to realize the human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls. They include the three pillars of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. While the SDGs are not legally binding, governments have assumed a moral commitment to implement them to the best of their capacities and in accordance with national priorities.

The 2030 Agenda and its SDGs are the outcome of an extended consultation and negotiation over several years. IPU, UNDP, national parliaments and hundreds of parliamentarians played a very active role throughout the process and advocated strongly for the inclusion of goals related to democratic governance.

The purpose of this self-assessment toolkit is to assist parliaments and their members to:

- assess their preparedness to engage with the SDGs;
- identify additional strategies, mechanisms and partnerships to support implementation of the SDGs more effectively.

The toolkit is designed to enable parliamentarians to identify good practices, gaps, opportunities and lessons learned. That will equip parliamentarians to effectively institutionalize the new agenda and mainstream the various goals into the legislative process. The toolkit is not prescriptive. It has been designed to be relevant to all parliaments, whatever their political system and stage of development.

Self-assessment is a method that parliaments can use to start their own process of internal benchmarking and to assess their state of preparedness for engagement with the SDGs. The conclusions of the self-assessment should allow parliaments to set priorities for reform in order to strengthen their response to the SDGs. The ultimate objective is to ensure that parliaments are fit for purpose to play a full role in realizing the 2030 Agenda.

# What are the SDGs?

*We welcome the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that has emerged with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Poverty eradication is the overarching objective of this new agenda, alongside the promotion of economic, social and environmental development. ... We applaud the ambition of this agenda to be transformative and leave no one behind, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. Indeed, to be successful, sustainable development has to place human beings at the centre of decisions. It has to aim at achieving their well-being with full respect for environmental limitations. It needs to be owned by the people and it requires their full participation. People are individuals endowed with rights and responsibilities towards each other and towards the environment. We must all invest in them as our most important resource.*

Placing democracy at the service of peace and sustainable development:  
Building the world the people want Declaration of the Fourth World Conference  
of Speakers of Parliament  
2 September 2015

The 17 SDGs and their 169 targets were designed to encapsulate all three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. They have a comprehensive policy framework, which applies to both developed and developing countries. The goals range from eradicating absolute poverty to reversing climate change, and from achieving gender equality to changing consumption and production patterns (see graphic). A number of global indicators have been designed to help track progress towards the goals.

The 2030 Agenda places people at the centre of the development process. It calls on governments, parliaments and other stakeholders to design and deliver laws and programmes that meet the needs of the people, break down policy silos, uphold human rights, and leave no one behind.



## A new framework for action

Not only do the SDGs identify sectoral priorities and set ambitious new targets; they also break new ground. It is the first time that an international compact has recognized the centrality of effective, inclusive and accountable institutions in the development process. Goal 16, also known as the governance goal, reflects IPU's and UNDP's long-held view that democratic governance is not only an end in itself, but also a means to sustainable development, peace and justice. As important legislative, oversight and representative institutions, parliaments have a direct interest in this goal (see box, page 7).

Goal 10 is another important SDG breakthrough. It recognizes that growing inequalities are a threat to the economy and social fabric, and so aims to reduce inequality within and among countries. Goal 5 (achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls)

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