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Regional Seminar on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for the IPU's Twelve Plus Geopolitical Group and East Asia Parliaments



הכנסת
THE KNESSET

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OUTCOME DOCUMENT

We, Members of Parliament from the IPU's Twelve Plus Geopolitical Group and East Asia gathered in Jerusalem, Israel, from 20 to 22 November 2018 for the first Regional Seminar on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The seminar was jointly organized by the Knesset and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Over the course of two days we engaged in comprehensive discussions on the SDGs, the priorities of the States and the actions promoted to date at the national and regional levels in order to advance the realization of the SDGs. We welcomed the active engagement of all participants as they shared their lessons learned and benefited from the rich contributions of the Knesset representatives, parliamentarians, and experts from the United Nations, the IPU and civil society.

We placed special emphasis on science, technology and innovation as crucial drivers not only of economic growth but also, more importantly, as a rich source of ideas for attaining all the SDGs—from poverty eradication to agriculture, health, clean water and sanitation, clean energy and climate change. The Seminar served as a forum for exchanging experiences, good practices and building inter-parliamentary cooperation.

Our debates focused on four main themes: (1) the Sustainable Development Agenda and priorities of the States in the region; (2) achieving sustainable development through the promotion of science, technology and innovation; (3) results obtained by parliaments in the region by overseeing the implementation of the SDG: the role of self-assessment; and (4) leveraging technology and innovation to achieve the SDGs while leaving no one behind.

Our discussions also addressed the following questions: How can science, technology and innovation help to advance the realization of the SDGs? How can they be used to address inequities and inequalities? How can parliamentarians mobilize science, technology and innovation to improve the lives of all people, including the most vulnerable and marginalized populations?

We proactively engaged in discussions on these issues and drew up the following strategies, actions and recommendations to advance parliamentary engagement with the SDGs:

- As the State institution entrusted with the long-term vision for the country, parliaments have a critical role to play in realizing the SDGs, ensuring policy coordination and strengthening inter-sectoral collaboration so as to maximize the impact of innovation and technology. Each parliament has to find effective ways to hold government accountable for the goals to which they have subscribed, and to make sure that enabling laws are passed and budgets are adopted. Ensuring that SDG implementation is on track is a crucial function that could allow

parliaments to assess progress and identify obstacles in a timely fashion. Parliaments should increase the use of oversight mechanisms, such as parliamentary hearings, question times and plenary reports, to assess the impact of government policies and programmes through a collaborative approach.

- Parliaments should also encourage governments to have clear road maps for achieving progress against agreed sustainable development goals and targets, and identify policy and legal bottlenecks that may require reform. Given their representative function, parliamentarians should strengthen communication and promote partnerships with the public, the private sector and civil society in order to find solutions that contribute to achieving SDGs, thus ensuring that all voices are taken into consideration.
- The SDGs represent a people-centred framework that aims to enhance and sustain the well-being of our societies and the planet. Parliaments should, first and foremost, examine their institutions and decision-making processes to ensure that they are fit for purpose. They should identify the goals that resonate with their national development priorities and mainstream the goals into their work and functioning to guarantee that they are consistent and coherent. Parliamentary action on the SDGs is urgently needed and practical steps are required to advance integration of the goals nationally and to monitor progress.
- Parliaments need to analyse their capacities to deliver on the SDGs as soon as possible. We strongly encourage all parliaments to use the IPU/UNDP SDGs self-assessment toolkit in order to identify the most suitable mechanism for their engagement in SDGs implementation. We believe that the SDGs offer a good framework for governing and opposition parties to work together constructively in the national interest and towards sustainable and inclusive solutions.
- We note with satisfaction that several parliaments have established subcommittees, task forces and other bodies dedicated to the SDGs, and believe that these structures are useful ways to coordinate parliamentary work and keep pressure on the government. At the same time, the SDGs should not be the sole preserve of a specialized committee. Every parliamentary committee, including the budget committee, needs to understand the link between its respective mandate and the SDGs, and find mechanisms to effectively translate the SDGs into their work. An appropriate means for coordinating committee work can be identified through the self-assessment methodology.
- In order to eradicate poverty and boost sustainable development that improves the lives of all, there is a need to develop and disseminate creative ideas and solutions that could advance a transformative impact by identifying new technologies or using the existing ones in innovative ways. Technologies and science should address the needs of the most vulnerable groups, as the risk of exacerbating inequalities is high. It is crucial that the benefits of technology and science are shared, and accessible to all.
- We stress the importance of taking measures that integrate the specific needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups when designing policies and programmes in relation to science, technology and innovation, and more broadly to the SDGs as a whole. As elected representatives of the people, Members of Parliament have an important role to play in communicating with citizens and reaching out to and engaging marginalized segments of the population in order to understand their specific needs in relation to sustainable development and simultaneously provide details about the progress made in that regard by the respective country. Direct engagement with non-governmental organizations, academic institutions and research institutes can be very helpful to that end.
- Technological progress is key to finding lasting solutions to economic, social and environmental challenges such as promoting energy efficiency and improving health-care

responses. Promoting sustainable industries and investing in scientific research and innovation are all important ways of facilitating sustainable development.

- Innovation should not only be a matter of science and technology; it should also form a main part of public policy and administration. New and flexible approaches to regulations should be identified and accompanied by the use of reliable, comparable, transparent data coupled with in-depth qualitative reviews that are used consistently, especially at the parliamentary level.
- Parliaments should promote and advocate for strong bilateral, regional and international inter-parliamentary cooperation on the SDGs and, in particular, the development of joint projects between countries as a basis for peace, stability and prosperity. Parliamentary action is also required to support regional and international cooperation across sectors to facilitate technology transfers, trade, investment and capacity-building. Only multisectoral cooperation can, in fact, provide a positive impact and ensure sustainable progress for all in the long run.

In order to inspire action on the SDGs, we will bring this Outcome Document to the attention of our colleagues in parliament through all possible channels. We also undertake to bring the document to the attention of other relevant stakeholders.

We request the IPU to bring our conclusions and recommendations to the attention of the global parliamentary community at the 140th IPU Assembly in Doha. We urge the IPU to promote parliamentary engagement with the SDGs and continue to work with the United Nations and other relevant partners to channel information and scientific evidence that will support effective action and impact.