



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

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Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals

United Nations

**Statement by Miguel Bermeo
Permanent Observer**

Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

I am most pleased to have this opportunity today to speak about the engagement of parliaments in the making of the new development framework and the goals that should define it, as the MDGs finish line of 2015 is now well within sight.

We welcome wholeheartedly the open and inclusive process that this working group is leading. Involving parliaments in the fashioning of the SDGs at this early stage will help ensure greater national ownership of the final outcome. Because of their legislative and budgetary prerogatives, parliaments of course will also be critical to the implementation of the SDGs. This is why last year's resolution on "interaction between the UN, national parliaments and the IPU clearly invites the IPU to "bring a parliamentary contribution to the design of the next generation of global development goals."

With this background in mind, allow me to take a few minutes now to highlight how we see parliaments involved in this discussion both in terms of the overall process and the substance.

We are of course reporting regularly to our members, some 160 national parliaments, on the debates that are taking place and we are doing all we can to connect parliamentarians to the various consultative tracks. Among other things, the IPU organized a roundtable with members of the High Level Panel when it met in Monrovia, and will again seek to contribute to a similar exercise at the panel's next meeting in Bali. At the same time, we have invited parliamentarians to participate in the national consultations that are taking place around the world as well as in the *My World* survey as a most innovative bottom-up initiative to gather the views of citizens at large.

Just a week from now, our entire membership will come together at the 128th IPU Assembly in Quito, Ecuador, for a debate on *well-being* as the ultimate purpose of development, and indeed of progress. Implicit in that question is a whole discussion about sustainability, and how we can no longer reduce development to a matter of economic growth and GDP.

Understanding what well-being is and how policy can support it is in our view a critical vantage point from which to consider the new SDGs.

Another major contribution to this discussion will come toward the end of the year through the joint UN-IPU Parliamentary Hearing here in New York. This flagship event, which usually attracts up to 200 parliamentarians, will be designed to look closely at the proposals that will have emerged from this working group and of all related processes.

On the substance, and as a result of these various consultations, we expect to have a few proposals to share with you in the months to come. One idea that we will explore at the upcoming assembly in Quito, and that was first discussed in its broad outline at the parliamentary roundtable in Monrovia, has to do with *democratic governance* – understood both as an end in itself and as an enabler of sustainable development.

The role of democratic governance in development has been widely accepted of course. After a decade-long debate and several high level commitments here at the UN, it is clear to all of us today that for sustainable development to be effective it must be representative of the will of all people and be based on transparent and accountable processes. Principles such as participation, transparency and accountability are central to democratic governance and should pervade all political institutions and the conduct of public administrations at all levels.

The question then is whether, based on this shared understanding, democratic governance should now be singled out as a goal in its own right and whether it should also permeate the other goals. While in Quito, we will survey a large sample of parliamentarians from all regions on their views on democratic governance and we hope that their answers will provide us with important new elements for reflection. A workshop we are organizing there will further help develop guidance on possible targets and indicators of democratic governance and how these can be adjusted to different country contexts and baselines. It may not be easy, but we hope that at the end of the day it will be possible to find a clear space for democratic governance in the new set of SDGs.

To conclude, we look forward to providing this working group with more concrete suggestions on the various proposals that will emerge in the coming months. The challenges that we are facing as a world community are unique in their complexity and require new approaches and new solutions. As you embark on this exciting journey, let me assure you of our full support and cooperation.

Thank you.