



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Second Committee of the General Assembly

Agenda item 25 (a): Quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairperson,

Improving the way the United Nations goes about organizing its operational activities is of interest not only to member states as the principal owners of this organization but also to all development partners around the world with which hundreds of UN field offices come into contact on a daily basis.

UN field operations are in themselves an important expression of development cooperation and as such must strive for the highest principles of aid and development effectiveness, such as those set at high level fora in Paris, Accra and Busan, as well as by the best practices of mutual accountability and partnership-building that can be derived from a variety of sources, including the UN's own Development Cooperation Forum (DCF).

Even though the United Nations as a whole accounts for a relatively small portion of development cooperation today, its impact goes well beyond the immediate results on the ground. The UN can help set a gold standard for the rest of the donor community as to how to do development cooperation that is fully country owned, aligned with national development plans, and in a way that maximizes and coordinates scarce resources for effective results. The current downturn in the global economy makes this an even greater imperative.

At the IPU, we are very impressed with the way the present quadrennial review has been conducted over a year-long process built on an honest assessment of what works, or doesn't, and a coherent vision of the future in view of a rapidly changing development landscape. While a lot remains to be done, as numerous reports have shown, things are clearly on the right course and the UN as a whole must be commended for its efforts. In this regard, the overall positive experience of the Delivering as One (ONE UN) model is perhaps the best expression of both progress and remaining challenges.

That said, I want to take a moment today to point out an aspect of the matter that could usefully be explored in the discussions this committee will be having in the coming weeks. I mean by this the role of parliaments as development partners in their own right. As we all know, it is parliaments that, in the case of donor countries, must adopt budgets for development cooperation, including the appropriations that go to support UN operations. And it is parliaments in both programme and partner countries that have the unique mandate to demand accountability for development results on behalf of all of their citizens.

It is for all these reasons then that over the last few years the IPU has worked closely with the UN to engage parliaments both in the field and in the global consultations of the Development Cooperation Forum. In addition, the IPU has promoted parliamentary engagement in the OECD-led process for aid effectiveness, and it is now representing parliaments on the Steering Committee of the nascent Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation.

To better understand how the UN works in the field, a parliamentary Advisory Group to the IPU Committee on UN Affairs visited six countries (Albania, Ghana, Montenegro, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Vietnam) where the One UN is being operationalized but also, for comparative purposes, where it is not yet in place. This group of parliamentarians met with UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams, government representatives, parliamentary leaders, bilateral donors and civil society organizations, among others, to learn firsthand of recent reform efforts and take stock of lessons learned. The picture that emerged from these visits shows that UN field operations already do have plenty of direct interaction with national parliaments at all levels and all spheres and with a particular focus on direct assistance. This includes joint projects (e.g., to improve budget oversight), policy advice to parliamentary committees, assistance in the revision of draft laws and in monitoring implementation of international commitment.

Specifically, our visits to UN field operations brought to light the need for Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to:

1. regularly appraise the parliament of the overall picture of UN operations in the country showing, among other things, how such operations align with the national development plan and other commitments;

2. ensure that concerned parliamentarians are invited to official reviews and evaluations of UN operations in the same fashion in which, increasingly, parliamentarians are expected to participate in select government-donor dialogue structures;
3. appoint a focal point to coordinate the interaction with the parliament so as to ensure that information flows through the appropriate internal channels and gets to the right people, or committees, in a timely fashion; likewise, the parliament will need to identify a clear counterpart to the UNCT;
4. develop clear and uniform guidelines on how to engage with parliament in each country, making sure that lessons learned are shared with others across the UN system;
5. ensure overall coordination of UN assistance to the parliament in order to create a consistent, multi-year and predictable capacity building programme.

In our view, the implementation of such measures would give concrete manifestation to the mandate in this year's resolution of the General Assembly on *"Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU"* (A/RES/66/261) which **"calls upon United Nations country teams to develop a more structured and integrated manner of working with national parliaments, inter alia, by involving parliaments in consultations on national development strategies and on development aid effectiveness."**

On the whole, these measures could help support country ownership of UN assistance in keeping with international commitments that very clearly assign a strong role to parliament in this regard. The Accra Agenda for Action, most notably, acknowledges *"the critical role and responsibility of parliaments in ensuring country ownership of development processes"* and goes on to ask developing country governments to *"work more closely with parliaments...in preparing, implementing and monitoring national development policies and plans"* (Para 13); Busan elaborated further referring to the need to *"accelerate and deepen the implementation of existing commitments to strengthen the role of parliaments in the oversight of development processes, including by supporting capacity development – backed by adequate resources and clear action plans"* (Para 21).

On the critical question of capacity development, while there is clearly more interest on the part of the international community as a whole, including the UN, in investing in parliaments, the reality is that funding remains disproportionately skewed toward other governance sectors, as it was also reported in last year's global survey of the Paris Declaration (p. 34). Yet, enhancing the capacities of parliaments to play their oversight, legislative and representative role can dramatically support country ownership of the development process. As long as parliaments continue to rank low in terms of donor support, it will be difficult for them to be effective development partners as envisaged by the new global framework for development cooperation.

Parliaments then remain a weak link in the complex architecture of development cooperation that, together, the UN and the IPU are well positioned to help strengthen. This is why we look forward to greater cooperation at the operational level between the IPU and the UN system, and particularly its largest operational arm, the UNDP. To be effective, such cooperation must be based on parliament's own need assessments and with parliaments themselves in the driver's seat.

In closing, Mr. Chairperson, allow me to comment briefly on just one of the many trends that have been highlighted in the Secretary-General report for this meeting, namely, the worrisome increase of earmarked, non-core funding of UN operations. As pointed out in the report, this kind of funding is of lesser quality and represents a kind of tied, unpredictable aid flows that in one way or another end up bypassing national systems. This is an issue that donor countries' parliaments need to be better informed of and that they need to help address. We pledge to make sure it is brought to the attention of our members together with other relevant recommendations of this quadrennial review.

With all this in mind, we look forward to further interaction with the United Nations at all levels, both political and operational, pursuant to the mandate of the General Assembly.

Thank you..