



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Chemin du Pommier 5
Case postale 330
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex
Geneva – Switzerland
www.ipu.org

IPU Statement

**Hon. Paddy Torsney
Permanent Observer to the
United Nations**

**UN@70: Human Rights at the
centre of the global agenda
High-Level Thematic Debate of
the UN General Assembly
12-13 July 2016**

President:

There is a strong case for systematic parliamentary involvement in the work of the Human Rights Council and UN treaty bodies. And there is a strong need for the UN human rights machinery to reach out to parliaments.

The UN human rights treaty bodies and the UN Human Rights Council have reporting procedures to monitor respect for human rights at the national level. Parliamentary action - passing laws or overseeing government action – ensures UN human rights recommendations are implemented. Parliaments can help connect that UN machinery to national realities. Human rights are not technical matters; their realization should not be left in the hands of government representatives and experts alone.

In recent years, the IPU has made it a priority to raise awareness among parliaments about the UN Human Rights Council, the treaty bodies, and the contribution parliaments can make to this work. IPU systematically informs parliaments of the forthcoming examination of their countries' national reports by the UN Human Rights Council, under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and by the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee).

IPU organizes capacity-building workshops for parliamentarians to enhance their understanding of UN human rights mechanisms. Increasingly parliaments are taking an active interest in the work of the Council and the CEDAW Committee. At each stage of the UPR and CEDAW procedure, parliaments can fulfil a role that can be shaped depending on their national constitutional framework.

Progress is being made. The CEDAW Committee systematically emphasizes the need for parliamentary involvement in its reporting procedure. Last month, the UN Human Rights Council organized, with the help of the IPU, a second panel discussion on the contribution of parliaments to its work. The panel highlighted the Council's increasing desire to explore ways to integrate parliament's contribution more regularly into its own deliberations. IPU stands ready to guide the Council toward achievement of this objective and hopes the other UN treaty bodies will follow the CEDAW Committee example and start reaching out to parliaments as well.

My second message is that it is absolutely critical that all of us draw fully on human rights norms and standards, in particular to ensure the full implementation of the SDG agenda.

The UN human rights treaty body system comprises 9 core human rights treaties setting out binding human rights norms to which States Parties have subscribed. Most States in the world have ratified at least some of those treaties and are therefore bound to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights obligations they contain. The concluding observations which the treaty bodies adopt provide a clear indication as to how a State Party is doing and offer concrete recommendations for improvement. Moreover, they have developed extensive jurisprudence that helps to better understand what state obligations each human right entails. There have also been steady improvements in the identification of concrete indicators to measure progress and setbacks in the implementation of human rights.

As we enter the era of the SDGs, it is critical that the UN and member states make full use of the core UN human rights conventions and the work done by their monitoring committees to enhance implementation of our ambitious development agenda.

Thank you.