



Assembly

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GUIDANCE NOTE FOR THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 128th IPU ASSEMBLY

This note provides a conceptual background to the main theme of the 128th Assembly: From unrelenting growth to purposeful development “Buen Vivir”: New approaches, new solutions. Delegations may wish to refer to this note as they reflect on their interventions in the general debate. The note is meant to help ensure a more focused discussion and a more actionable outcome by the organization as a whole.

Why this theme and what does it mean? The focus on well-being (“buen vivir”) reflects a growing concern around the world that something is amiss in the way we think about development and, more generally, about progress. In most countries, development is most often equated with economic growth. This type of growth in turn is expressed in terms of higher consumption and production of goods and services measured as gross domestic product (GDP). The underlying assumption is that the more material wealth people have the happier they are. Today, this thinking permeates virtually all policy-making, social interaction and business enterprises.

Economic growth is undoubtedly important, especially to people in developing countries who lack access to electricity and clean water, a high quality of education and health services, decent jobs and safety nets. However, after reaching a certain point of general satisfaction and capacity, growth per se is unable to deliver on its underlying promise of human emancipation. At a basic level, there is of course the law of diminishing returns, whereby merely adding more of the same becomes pointless. More importantly, exponential and unbridled growth over time produces a number of environmental and social externalities. Growth of any kind ultimately depends on natural resources and fundamentally finite ecosystem services. Many of these resources may well be renewed over time, but only if human consumption and production patterns respect the natural cycle.

In the past couple of decades, societies have devised new ways of making production and consumption more efficient so as to mitigate their impact on the environment. These include solar and wind energy and recycling. Following on from last year’s landmark Rio+20 Conference, the world’s hopes are increasingly pinned on the green economy. While all of these measures are useful and, if implemented, will indeed reduce environmental damage, in the long run they may not succeed if world production and consumption continue to grow at breakneck speed, compounded by population growth.

Moreover, the more resources are exhausted and the environment is polluted, the more difficult – and expensive - it becomes for the production machinery to keep running. Already some industries would not have been able to survive had they not managed to shift the cost of their pollution to the public. In short, beyond a certain point, a growth-centric economic model undermines its own foundations in the natural world.

Unrelenting growth is also a double-edged sword on the social front. As people become richer they often find themselves paying a higher price in terms of less leisure time, more pressure at work and at home, exposure to new diseases, weaker community bonds and a general sense of displacement. Often, they are convinced that the solution to all these problems lies in acquiring more and more wealth or services that are perceived as necessary to their enjoyment. When government policies to support growth are too focused on aggregate results and not sufficiently on distribution so that everyone gets a fair share of the economic pie, the result in social terms is even more catastrophic. While growing inequalities undermine the economy through lower aggregate demand, simultaneously they also prompt decision makers and individuals alike to press down even harder on the growth accelerator: thus the solution to relative deprivation linked to growing inequalities becomes even more growth.

Economic growth and its attendant affluence are not usually sufficient to achieve human emancipation and a healthy body politic. From time immemorial, it has been shown that money and “things” are not all there is to life: people need to express themselves in myriad ways in both the private and public spheres, especially when it comes to the decisions that affect them directly. A political voice and governance are therefore key dimensions of well-being. They belong to the category of things that money cannot buy.

Irrespective of the approach we take to development, one thing is clear: there is no easy way out. Something must be done to change the current course. At the United Nations, a broad process of reflection on a new development framework has already begun. It flows from the Rio+20 Conference that called for a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be adopted in 2015, when the current MDGs will expire. Governments and communities around the world are expected to contribute fresh ideas and develop new goals that would apply to both developed and developing countries.

In 2011, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 65/309 entitled Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development, inviting governments “to pursue the elaboration of additional measures that better capture the importance of the pursuit of happiness and well-being in development with a view to guiding their public policies.” Previously, in 2010, it had adopted Resolution 64/196 on Harmony with Nature, inviting governments “to consider, as appropriate, the issue of promoting life in harmony with nature ...”.

Some developing countries are already experimenting with these notions by designing innovative policies to balance growth with other human and societal needs in a way that achieves overall well-being. Their example shows that there is no single path to development and that high levels of human well-being are possible with appropriate policies even in spite of limited resources.

The IPU is contributing actively to this global conversation in close cooperation with the United Nations. In line with its democracy-building mandate, its primary concern is to ensure that democratic governance is factored into the emerging development framework. The general debate of the 128th Assembly will provide a golden opportunity for parliamentarians from across the world to exchange their views on these fundamental questions.

Suggested questions for discussion:

- How can we redirect economic growth towards well-being?
- What good practices exist of policies that promote well-being in all its dimensions?
- What can developed and developing countries learn from each other in this respect?
- How can such a perspective be translated into a new set of sustainable development goals?

Suggested reading:

- Towards a new development vision: The emerging global debate and IPU preparations – letters from IPU President Abdelwahad Radi
- IPU submission to the global consultations on the post-2015 sustainable development framework
- Prosperity without growth: The transition to a sustainable economy - http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/data/files/publications/prosperity_without_growth_report.pdf
- Report by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress - www.stiglitz-sen-fitoussi.fr
- World Happiness Report - <http://www.earth.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/Sachs%20Writing/2012/World%20Happiness%20Report.pdf>
- "Buen Vivir" National plan of Ecuador – official website <http://plan.senplades.gob.ec>



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Summary of the main points of discussion between parliamentarians and members of the High Level Panel on the Post 2015 Development Agenda

- Monrovia, 30 January 2013 -

A round table discussion was held in Monrovia on 30 January 2013 between parliamentarians and members of the High Level Panel of Eminent Persons established by the UN Secretary-General to formulate a broad vision for the post 2015 development agenda.

The meeting was co-chaired by Ms. R. Kadaga, Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda, and Mr. J. Podesta (United States of America), member of the High Level Panel. It was attended by Mr. J. A. Tyler, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Liberia, Mr. G. Findley, President pro tempore of the Senate of Liberia, and other leading members of the Liberian Parliament, together with Mr. S. Chowdhury, member of the Parliament of Bangladesh, Mr. H. Bayley, member of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, members of the High Level Panel and advisers.

The MDG process was designed without the involvement of or consultation with parliaments or parliamentarians. No consideration was given to their role in relation to development.

Since then we have learnt many lessons. One is that we need parliaments and, more generally, democratic institutions in order to implement and monitor strategies to attain the goals.

This shortcoming in the existing goals needs to be addressed and adequate thought must be given to the means of implementation. As one participant put it, *"it is one thing to come up with a plan; quite another thing to bring about change."* Any new framework must necessarily involve attention to the institutional framework that is required to deliver the goals.

If there is agreement on this basic tenet, what then is the best way to incorporate democracy or democratic governance in the next generation of development goals? Should it be regarded as an end in itself and therefore expressed as a measurable goal? Or should it be viewed as a means to an end and therefore underpin all the goals? There was consensus that we acknowledge and do both.

Defining democratic governance

Democracy is itself both a goal and a mode of government. It strives to deliver equity, social justice and sustainable development. In its essence, it is inclusive. It is founded on the right of

everyone to take part in the management of public affairs based on inclusion and people's participation in government.

Democracy advances equality between men and women and helps strengthen women's participation in political life. It is inseparable from the rule of law and respect for human rights. It is built on checks and balances and ensures transparency and accountability.

Democracy (or democratic governance) encompasses all relevant institutions of democracy at all levels - parliaments, cities and local governments, state audit institutions, to mention but a few.

States already acknowledge governance and parliaments as being essential to development. They have included them in the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs and several resolutions of the UN General Assembly.

The discussions in Monrovia focused particularly on the important functions performed by parliaments, as well as some of the challenges they face in attempting to contribute to the attainment of global development goals.

Invariably, the MDGs required changes in laws. Attaining gender equality often calls for special legislative measures. Ensuring access to treatment for HIV/AIDS requires changes in discriminatory laws. Reaching the goals means allocating sufficient funding through the State budget. Implementation needs oversight, debate and correction. All of this calls for action by parliaments.

Parliaments were late in addressing the Paris principles on aid effectiveness. Today, they are part of the process and are assisting in implementing the agenda that emerged from the Busan Conference. They are helping to ensure that aid is part of the national budget and that accountability and oversight are brought to bear on international development assistance.

Parliaments in developed countries are increasingly paying attention to the fulfillment of international aid commitments. Some of them regularly provide cross-party political support for their government's aid commitments and monitor their implementation.

Parliaments in many countries can do a much better job at providing support for development goals. More often than not, parliaments are themselves not given the resources they need to carry out their tasks. Development partners tend to focus on supporting governments and civil society, not parliaments.

Governments are not always helpful. Parliaments are rarely consulted ahead of negotiations. Ministers have a tendency to negotiate abroad without prior consultation with parliament. They undertake much of their multilateral engagement without input from or rendering accounts to parliaments.

The new development goals should be accompanied by a clear commitment to provide support and resources to parliaments so that they can fulfill their functions within a democracy and provide support for attaining the new goals.

It is important to associate cities and local governments with the new development goals. Service delivery is often in their hands. They run schools, health clinics and many other services that are at the heart of attaining the MDGs. They are also closely linked to people

and often represent the first and also the broadest avenue for people to take part in public affairs.

Recommendations for the post-2015 agenda

The next generation of development goals should apply to all countries; developed, developing and least developed countries. Democracy is absolutely essential to help countries emerging from conflict to regain peace, stability and sustainable development. In all of them, democracy needs to be nurtured and improved.

Governments and people in each country must take ownership of the new set of goals. Hence, the importance of campaigning to raise awareness of the goals, reaching out to people everywhere and stimulating debate. This must involve connecting with political leaders and opinion-makers, and that includes parliaments. The new post-2015 development goals will not have as great, or greater, impact than the Millennium Development Goals unless they have strong and active support from governments and the public.

The High Level Panel report should make explicit recommendations on the need for widespread public involvement and political buy-in, which can be achieved with full parliamentary engagement. After publication of its report, the High Level Panel should conduct a global campaign to win support for its proposals.

Parliaments should be encouraged to debate the new goals and to examine how best to ensure their implementation. It makes a great deal of sense to require every government to submit the new goals to parliament and to report back to the United Nations, within a year, on the outcome of that debate. Parliaments should be fully involved in designing national targets to accompany the goals and thereafter monitor their implementation.

There are precedents for proceeding in this manner. Increasingly parliaments are involved in the implementation of international commitments. More and more parliaments today examine and sometimes contribute to poverty reduction strategy papers prepared by their government and donors such as the World Bank.

Similarly, parliaments often contribute to the national report to the CEDAW Committee. They attend the session at which the report is examined, and debate the Committee's recommendations in parliament with a view to their implementation. At the request of the UN General Assembly, a similar process is now under examination by States. It aims to associate parliaments more closely with the Universal Periodic Review mechanism established by the UN Human Rights Council.

Practical proposals for goals and targets

It is today perfectly feasible to establish a measureable goal directly related to democracy (or democratic governance). Targets that are expressed in functional terms, such as participation, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability, can accompany such a goal. Progress in attaining these targets can be measured on the basis of indicators that have been developed over the last fifteen years (or are in the process of being developed).

The IPU developed criteria for democratic parliaments in 2006. It later developed a self-assessment tool on the basis of which a growing number of parliaments in developed and developing countries are identifying areas for improving their performance. On the basis of this experience and working with the support of many parliaments, the IPU is now developing a set of indicators for democratic parliaments, which it hopes to complete by 2014. These may be instructive for the post-2015 goal and target-setting process.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion to the discussions, the co-chairs agreed that democracy (or democratic governance) is both an end in itself (a goal) and cuts across all goals (an enabler). The new development goals require national ownership of, and commitment to, development programs and policies. Parliaments can play a crucial role in giving development policies legitimacy. A well-functioning parliament is essential to democracy (or democratic governance). It requires support to strengthen its capacity to carry out its fundamental tasks relating to representation, transparency and accountability.

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11 February 2013

Toward a new development vision: the emerging global debate and IPU preparations

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to follow up on my letter of 21 January 2013 on the above subject.

The High Level Panel established by the United Nations Secretary-General to map a broad vision for the post-2015 development agenda met in Monrovia from 30 January to 1 February. At the invitation of the Panel, the IPU organized a round table discussion between members of parliament and Panel members on 30 January.

I am now pleased to enclose a summary of this discussion. As you will see, it concluded with an agreement that democracy (or democratic governance) is both a goal in itself and cuts across all goals. I would like to enlist your Parliament's support in ensuring that the post 2015 development agenda reflects this agreement.

I would also like to draw your attention to the Global Consultation on Governance and the Post-2015 Development Framework, which is organized by the United Nations and will take place at the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand, South Africa, from 28 February to 1 March. This important meeting is open to the participation of parliaments and I warmly encourage you to ensure that there is a strong parliamentary presence. Information regarding this event can be found at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/296607>.

May I also urge you to ensure that as many members of your parliament as possible take part in the global consultations through the interactive survey, *My World* (<http://www.myworld2015.org/?partner=MP>). As I mentioned in my earlier letter, this is another practical and effective way for parliamentarians to influence the post-2015 agenda. The responses from individual members of parliament will be consolidated as a distinct parliamentary category and will be regularly submitted to the High Level Panel.

I look forward to meeting you all at the 128th Assembly in Quito next month when we will have further opportunities to discuss the future development goals.

Yours sincerely,

Abdelwahad Radi
President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union



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21 January 2013

Toward a new development vision: the emerging global debate and IPU preparations

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to enlist your Parliament's support and involvement in the design of the international development framework that will be put in place in 2015.

As I am sure you are aware, the Millennium Development Goals are drawing to a close two years from now. As the international community makes a last push to reach the MDGs, it is also embarking on a course to chart a new set of Sustainable Development Goals.

The MDGs were largely a product of the United Nations and its member States and they did not include all dimensions of development. This time there is a determined effort to consult more widely and to consider all aspects of development. The IPU has defended the view that parliaments should be consulted and the UN General Assembly endorsed these sentiments last year when it formally encouraged the IPU to bring a parliamentary contribution to the design of the next generation of global development goals.

I believe you will agree that democratic principles, values and institutions should underpin the post-2015 development framework. Many of today's shortcomings in sustainable development can in large measure be ascribed to a lack of representation, participation, transparency, effective decision-making and oversight. Taken together, these values strike at the core of what is commonly referred to as "democratic governance."

The IPU has set forth its own vision of democracy on many occasions. We affirm that democracy is a universally recognized ideal and goal that seeks to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice and to build sustainable development. Democracy is also a mode of government that is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs. In the view of the IPU, democracy requires equality between men and women and their full participation in society. It also requires well-functioning democratic institutions.

There is therefore no question in my mind that the IPU must defend the notion that democracy should be part of the new development framework in one form or another. At last year's United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) governments, made it clear that "to achieve our sustainable development goals we need institutions at all levels that are effective, transparent, accountable and democratic". I believe that it is precisely on this ground that the IPU position in the upcoming debate must begin to be built so that a clear commitment to democratic governance – both as a standalone goal and as a dimension of other goals - will be reflected in the new Sustainable Development Goals.

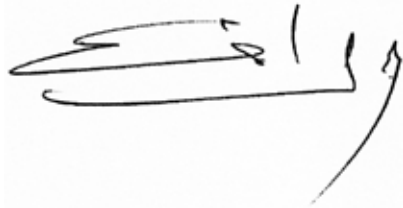
I very much hope that you will wish to support this proposal and to facilitate participation by your parliament in the consultations that are now underway. In order to facilitate your task, I enclose a Note that succinctly outlines the different processes that have been launched at the national, regional and global levels. I am currently in contact with the High-level Panel that has been set up by the United Nations Secretary-General, and the IPU is organizing a round table discussion with members of the panel at their next meeting in Monrovia at the end of this month. I enclose a Note containing our initial submission to these global consultations.

I encourage you to make sure that your parliament participates in the national and regional consultations that are taking place. I would also like to suggest that you consider taking part in some of the regional consultations, in particular the one that will take place in South Africa at the end of February to discuss governance and development.

I would be very grateful if you could keep the IPU Secretariat informed of any action you may take. This will help us better prepare for the 128th IPU Assembly in Quito which offers us an opportunity to formulate a more elaborate IPU contribution to the global consultations.

I am convinced that we have a unique opportunity to influence the new sustainable development goals and that by working together we can help ensure that democracy becomes part of the new international development framework. I believe this is fully in line with IPU's strategy which invites us to work together to advance democratic culture, values and institutions throughout the world.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes that form a cursive name.

Abdelwahad Radi
President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

NOTE ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARLIAMENTS AND THE IPU TO CONTRIBUTE
TO CONSULTATIONS ON THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Parliamentary input at the global level

Leading the way in the global mobilization, a **High Level Panel** of some 27 eminent personalities was constituted last fall to advise the United Nations Secretary-General on the broad contours of the new development framework. The panel is chaired by the Presidents of Indonesia and of Liberia together with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. It will conclude with a major report in May that is expected to provide overall direction to intergovernmental negotiations later on. The IPU has been invited by the HLP to organize a special roundtable with a few members of parliament at an upcoming meeting of the HLP in Monrovia on 30 January. This will be a first important opportunity for the IPU to put forward a perspective on democratic governance and to gauge the ways in which it may be included in the final conclusions of the Panel.

A **Working Group** of some thirty member States will be set up within the United Nations General Assembly to begin to sketch out the new SDGs. The Working Group is to submit concrete proposals to the General Assembly in September, when a special **High Level Meeting** of heads of government will take place in New York. The meetings of the Working Group will be open thus offering opportunities for the IPU to follow closely the deliberations and to contribute to them on the basis of recommendations formulated by the IPU over the years.

There will be several **regional** and **thematic consultations** assisted by the United Nations in cooperation with parliaments, civil society, academia, and the private sector. At the regional level, three consultations with MPs and civil society were already organized, partly with IPU support, in Africa and Asia. Global level consultations are taking place around eleven thematic clusters that include one on governance.¹ The IPU is taking part in the governance cluster that will culminate with a major event in South Africa toward the end of February. The consultation aims to help define the specific components of governance that will be particularly important to the new development framework and formulate a measureable goal and corresponding targets. More information about all regional and thematic consultations, which for the most part will run to the end of March, can be found online at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/>.

An important opportunity for the IPU to engage in this global process will also come with our **128th Assembly in Quito** (22-27 March). The main theme of the Assembly - *From unrelenting growth to purposeful development "Buen Vivir": New approaches, new solutions* – very clearly calls for a broad discussion about the very purpose of development and how this should be achieved. To facilitate this discussion, a few personalities and experts have been invited to deliver keynote addresses that will also focus on the linkages between development and democratic governance. The IPU will also conduct a survey of delegates on this topic during the five days of the Assembly and the results will be presented and discussed at a workshop on the last day.

This year's annual **Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations**, in November, will examine the proposals that will have emerged and provide MPs with an opportunity to discuss them with government representatives and UN officials. While the overall parameters of the new development vision will likely have been set by the time the Hearing takes place, there is likely to remain quite a bit of negotiating flexibility with respect to the specific goals and particularly their targets and indicators.

¹ The full list of thematic consultations include: inequalities; health; education; growth and employment; environmental sustainability governance; conflict and fragility; population dynamics; hunger, food and nutrition security; energy and water.

Parliamentary input at the national level

The process leading up to the post-2015 development framework is also designed to gather the views of stakeholders from the ground up both institutionally and in their individual capacities. At the moment, broad-based **national consultations** are being organized in some 66 countries with the assistance of the United Nations, but many more countries may eventually be involved. Although each country is free to organize its own consultations (through a combination of hearings, local town hall meetings, workshops, citizens' surveys etc.), the idea of these exercises is to engage as many people as possible from all sectors of society. As a result of an explicit IPU request, the official guidelines for the national consultations now clearly identify parliament as a stakeholder to be consulted in every country. Parliaments are encouraged take part in one form or another in national consultations taking place in their country. More information on these consultations (including the official guidelines and contact details of the UN coordinator in each participating country) is available at <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/sitemap>.

Participation in the consultations at both national and global levels will also be possible through an online **interactive survey** called *My World*. This survey asks respondents to select their top development priorities from a list of sixteen items that have been identified through a series of focus groups. Requiring only seconds to complete, the survey has been designed so that decision-makers and ordinary citizens at large can express their views immediately from wherever they are and through a variety of means (smart phone; SMS message; computer etc.). The opinions collected through *My World* will be channelled to the High Level Panel and the other processes outlined above.

It is suggested that the survey, which is available in many languages, be brought to the attention of all members of parliament. In practical terms, it should be possible to post the electronic link to the survey prominently on each parliament's website, circulate information about the survey to all members with an exhortation to participate, and encouraging them to promote the survey with their own constituents. The survey can be found online at <http://www.myworld2015.org/?partner=MP>.