



PARLIAMENTARY MEETING ON THE OCCASION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE

Copenhagen, 16 December 2009

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Danish Folketing



Statement of the IPU

An ambitious agenda for parliamentary action beyond COP15

“We want to see commitments to address climate change that are politically, operationally and legally binding,” stated IPU President, Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, today. “These last few days have demonstrated that efforts to forge an ambitious, effective and fair deal do not stop in Copenhagen”, he continued.

The President spoke at the opening of the Parliamentary meeting which the IPU and the Danish Parliament jointly organized on the occasion of the United Nations Climate Change Conference. The meeting brought together several hundred members of parliament from over sixty countries to discuss what the post-Copenhagen agenda should look like and how parliaments can contribute to its implementation.

The President of the Republic of Maldives, Mr. Mohamed Nasheed, in his key-note address provided an initial response. We may end up with the best agreements and necessary resources and still fail if we do not have the accountability provided by democracy and good governance. They are essential to mitigating climate change issues successfully, he stated.

The debate identified a broad agenda for parliamentary action which goes beyond the confines of COP15. Climate change is closely linked to many other fundamental issues of our times, like food insecurity and water crisis. Significantly, the scientific findings relating to climate change were recognized by the parliamentarians. They voiced their unequivocal support for ambitious action to address climate change.

Parliaments and the executive branch have different responsibilities when it comes to international negotiations. The participants noted that the subject of climate change was no exception. Governments negotiate rules and arrangements on behalf of States.

That said, the parliamentarians also felt that there was a need for greater understanding of Parliament’s role to scrutinize government action, influence policies pursued in intergovernmental negotiations, ratify international agreements, and implement them through appropriate legislation and budget allocations.

The participants identified many initiatives they can take to reinforce that role. Assessing all bills before parliament from the perspective of their impact on climate change was one such example. Formulating indicators against which parliaments can measure progress in governmental programs to address climate change was another. Ensuring that legislation relating to climate change was particularly sensitive to the needs of the vulnerable in society was yet another one. In all, the participants identified an ambitious agenda for parliamentary action beyond COP15.

The participants were unanimous in calling upon the IPU to assume a leadership role in following up on the outcome of COP15. The IPU can facilitate exchange of information and good examples of parliamentary action, build capacity in parliaments to address climate change, mobilize parliamentary action and provide a framework for consultation between parliamentarians.

The IPU must undertake a major role in strengthening cooperation between parliaments and the United Nations in the area of climate change, just like it does in so many other areas. The observer status granted by the UNFCCC to the IPU constituted but a first step. It would now have to be given real substance, stated the IPU President.

President Gurirab promised to bring the outcome of the meeting to the attention of COP15 and to invite the Summit to reflect in its results an agreement to engage with the IPU and parliaments in implementing the agreements reached in Copenhagen.

Your presence in large numbers in Copenhagen provides eloquent testimony of a global parliamentary awareness and commitment to address together the most pressing challenge of our times, declared IPU President Gurirab at the end of the meeting. We have a shared interest to build on that.