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## Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Sub-Saharan Africa

Kampala (Uganda), 1–3 March 2017

Organized jointly by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Parliament of Uganda



### Concept note

In September 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They will inform development agendas and policies over the next 15 years. The 17 Goals and their 169 targets are available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>.

If successful, the SDGs will transform the world and peoples' lives. IPU Member Parliaments have committed to do what is necessary to carry forward this vision of transformation. Under the auspices of the IPU, parliaments have pledged to translate the SDGs into enforceable domestic law, hold governments accountable and align budgets with national sustainable development plans. To achieve these commitments, Parliaments have concluded that they must strengthen their decision-making processes.

The IPU and its Member Parliaments were actively involved in negotiating the SDGs. They campaigned for democratic governance to be a stand-alone Goal by arguing that it enables development in all societies. As a result, Goal 16 was adopted. It highlights that governance, inclusion, participation, rights and security are an important part of achieving sustainable development. The ultimate aim of Goal 16 is to deliver on the expectations and needs of citizens in an effective and democratic manner.

Over the last ten years, Africa has taken significant steps towards strengthening governance activities as one of its strategic priorities. Effective institutions are instrumental in the management of natural resources. By effectively managing those resources across the region, human and economic development as well as tangible wealth for ordinary people can be fostered.

Functional institutions, visionary leadership, and participatory governance mechanisms are key ingredients of the transformative agenda in Africa. Good governance, indeed, ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation and expenditure of development resources.

The environment and health are two policy areas in which effective governance and policymaking are needed. Communities around the world are beginning to feel the impact of climate change: nowhere is this more evident than in sub-Saharan Africa. Women, adolescents and children in that region are also disproportionately affected by ill health. This trend will worsen if floods and droughts become increasingly frequent and severe. However, policymakers in the region also have a strong endowment of natural resources and skills on which to build. That gives them a window of opportunity to mitigate climate change threats and ensure the health and well-being of millions of Africans. They can do that by introducing clean technologies in all businesses and promoting efficient transportation.

#### **Objectives and expected outcomes of the Regional Seminar**

The Seminar will aim to define the opportunities and challenges that parliaments face in fully exercising their role in the implementation of the SDGs. It will help participants to assess whether parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa are properly equipped to advance the vision of the SDGs.

A discussion of Goal 16 will centre on how parliaments should institutionalize the SDGs so as to capture synergies and build coherence when policies are being developed. To be able to do this, each parliament will need to evaluate its own institutional processes. Special emphasis will therefore be placed on assessing what

parliaments need to exercise their legislative, oversight, budgetary and representative functions in order to effectively translate the global commitments of the SDGs into meaningful change on the ground.

By concentrating on environmental and health policy, the discussion should help shed light on the governance gaps that make service provision particularly difficult in some countries. The Seminar aims put climate change and health on the agendas of the parliaments of sub-Saharan Africa. That should spur regional cooperation and greater national commitment to mitigate and adapt to climate change, which affects health and well-being in both individual countries and the whole region.

**Venue and dates:** Uganda, 1–3 March 2017.

**Draft Agenda:** The agenda will be jointly developed by the IPU and the Ugandan Parliament, with input and technical advice from relevant United Nations partners.

**Participation:** The Seminar is intended for the parliaments of sub-Saharan Africa.

**Language:** Proceedings will be conducted in English, French and Portuguese.