Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Scaling up action for the Sustainable Development Goals: Finance, Institutions, and Politics

Trusteeship Council Chamber, United Nations Headquarters, New York
13 and 14 February 2025

Programme

Moderator: **Dan Dunsky**, Journalist

Thursday, 13 February	
10:00–10:15	**Welcome remarks**
	H.E. Mr. Philemon Yang, President of the United Nations General Assembly **Hon. Dr. Tulia Ackson,** President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
10:15–10:45	**Interactive survey**
	Participants will be invited to respond to a few questions designed to identify basic positions and trends. The survey will be conducted on **Mentimeter.com** and will require participants to use their phones or tablets.
10:45 –11:45	**The deep challenge of the SDGs: mobilizing political will**
	The SDGs constitute the most comprehensive global plan to set economies and societies on a sustainable path and to tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality, advancing social justice and creating the conditions for peace. With only a fraction of the goals on track globally, and just five years left before their 2030 expiration date, parliamentary action to help implement the goals is more urgent than ever. Although the SDGs were adopted by consensus at the global level, national ownership of the goals remains weak. Not all political forces in each country have adopted the SDGs as a shared agenda to drive policy at the national level. Many parliaments remain divided as to the actual policies required for the implementation of the SDGs. Further complicating this picture is an underlying scepticism that support for the SDGs can be sustained over a long time regardless of each country's political struggles. Guiding questions: • What explains relatively low levels of national ownership for the SDGs? • How can parliaments overcome conflictual politics that interfere with policies that advance the SDGs?

	• How can political momentum for the SDGs be reconstituted in the run up to the 2030 deadline? • How can existing cooperation frameworks between the UN and parliaments help turbocharge political engagement regarding SDG implementation? **Panellists:** • **Ms. Nelly Mutti**, Speaker of the National Assembly, Zambia • **Mr. Guy Ryder**, Under-Secretary-General for Policy, United Nations • **Prof. Jeffrey Sachs**, President, Sustainable Development Solutions Network
11:45 – 13:00	**Parliamentary oversight of the SDGs: the unfinished business of institutionalization**
	IPU surveys and government reports show that, despite some progress, parliamentary engagement in the SDGs remains uneven and unfocused. Few parliaments have institutionalized the SDGs so that parliamentarians are fully familiar with the goals and have the capacity to oversee their implementation in a sustained manner through legislation and budgetary allocations. Most notably, parliamentary oversight of national progress reports to the UN has remained stagnant over the years without ever achieving a critical mass. An SDG accountability "culture" has yet to take root in most parliaments so that laws and budgets are consistently tested against national plans for the SDGs and all relevant communities, including women, youth and the most vulnerable, are appropriately engaged and represented. Despite their popularity, parliamentary bodies for the SDGs such as committees and caucuses have produced limited results. Guiding questions: • How can parliamentary structures and practices for the SDGs be strengthened? • What is required to bring about a whole-of-parliament effort for the SDGs? • What other institutions must be mobilized and strengthened to support parliamentary oversight of the SDGs? **Panellists:** • **Mr. Adama Bictogo**, Speaker of the National Assembly, Cote d'Ivoire • **H.E. Ambassador Ulugbek Lapasov**, Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the United Nations • **Ms. Marina Ponti**, Global Director, UN SDG Global Campaign
13:00–15:00	**Lunch break**
15:00–16:30	**Development cooperation and the SDGs: making the most of aid**
	Official development assistance (ODA) and other sources of foreign aid are a central pillar of the financing for the achievement of SDGs in many developing countries. ODA is being disproportionately allocated to humanitarian assistance and refugee costs as well as to climate mitigation at the expense of core support for public goods and infrastructure spending in developing countries. Moreover, despite the importance of collective action to provide developing countries with the necessary financing and technologies to accelerate the

	implementation of the SDGs, geopolitical tensions and the resurgence of nationalism are hindering international cooperation and coordination. In 2023, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)'s Development Assistance Committee contributed a total of US$223.7 billion in programs and direct budget support toward developing countries. While this amount represents a considerable nominal increase over the past decade, it is still only half of the commitment of 0.7% of GNI in global aid as set out in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Besides aggregate figures, the quality of foreign aid, i.e., the specific allocation and expenditure modalities to make the most of aid, is often lacking. Key principles of aid effectiveness, such as national ownership, accountability and managing for results, are inconsistently applied. As the number of development cooperation actors increase, including new multilateral development banks and new donors from emerging economies, coordinating aid in recipient countries becomes more challenging and the financial size of aid decreases. Governance and in particular the lack of representation of developing countries in the international financial institutions, are additional factors which can undermine the overall volume and quality of aid. Guiding questions: • How can parliamentary oversight of the budget and other key aid processes be strengthened in both donor and recipient countries? • As a form of public finance, can aid be used to catalyze private investments and other flows of development finance? • What reforms are needed at national and global levels to make aid more effective? **Panellists:** • **H.E. Ambassador Lok Bahadur Thapa**, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the United Nations • **Ms. Susan Brown,** Assistant Secretary Genera and Director, Bureau for External Engagement and Advocacy, UNDP • **Ms. Nilima Gulrajani**, Principal Research Fellow, Development and Public Finance Team, ODI Global
16:30–18:00	**Raising domestic resources for the SDGs: a case for tax reforms**
	There is a growing understanding among Member States of the importance of expanding and mobilizing domestic public resources to achieve the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. As indicated in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, domestic public resources should contribute directly to public goods and services such as infrastructure, health and education. In the long term, this can contribute to poverty reduction, greater economic growth and increased trust in governments. Since 2000, while there has been an increase of tax revenue as a global average, various financial, health and economic crises have caused this growth to be unstable. In addition, national reforms are needed to redistribute the tax burden more fairly between different classes of contributors and generally to boost tax collection, including by building capacity to fight tax evasion. There is also room for innovative ideas such as maritime and aviation transport taxes that can help poor countries finance the climate transition.

	Over the past years more attention has been paid to international tax cooperation which includes multilateral tax cooperation instruments, transforming the international tax cooperation landscape and enabling progress to combat tax avoidance, with the aim of ensuring that no countries are left behind. In this connection, intergovernmental negotiations towards a United Nations Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation will start in February 2025. Guiding questions: • What are the most important tax collection issues at national and global levels, and are current reform proposals strong enough? • How can parliaments help ensure better compliance with national and global tax rules? • Is there political support for financial transaction taxes and other such innovative taxes to support global public goods? **Panellists:** • **Mr. Navid Hanif**, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs • **Mr. Ian Gary**, Director Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency (FACT), and Member of the Global Alliance for Tax Justice • **Ms. Marlene Nembhand Parker**, Chief Tax Counsel, Tax Administration of Jamaica
Friday, 14 February	
10:00–11:30	**The debt crisis and the SDGs: proposals for sustainable solutions**
	The ongoing debt crisis is a development crisis. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the global public debt reached a record US$ 97 trillion in 2023. Unsustainable debt servicing obligations have become a major roadblock to the implementation of the SDGs in many developing countries, as 54 developing countries spend more than 10% of their revenues on net interest payments and 3.3 billion people live in countries that spend more on interest payments than on education or health. Developing countries are almost always in a position of dependency vis-à-vis foreign borrowers and global financial markets. While much of the global response to this problem tends to focus on debt relief, a comprehensive, sustainable solution must consider the whole debt cycle. This begins by looking at debt sustainability assessments which would include the structural causes of unsustainable borrowing, development spending needs, better capture vulnerabilities and risks and the different debt instruments from public and private sources that are available to countries in need. As debt service burden is set to remain elevated for several years, more needs to be done for financing options to reduce the risk of liquidity crises. To prevent the debt crisis further escalating the development crisis, a new multilateral debt workout mechanisms bringing all creditors together needs to be considered along with actions to strengthen governance of the global financial system, which today includes non-banking actors, institutional investors, asset managers and other market players. Work has been done in international fora on debt such as the G20 Common Framework which aims to ensure a more development-oriented international debt architecture. The recently adopted Pact for the Future calls to accelerate the reform of the international financial architecture to make the system more inclusive and improve the participation of

developing countries. Additional transformations are also needed to the system such as scaling up affordable long-term finance and providing greater liquidity in times of crisis.

Guiding questions:

- How can parliaments strengthen their oversight of government debt?
- What measures are needed to better regulate the financial sector nationally and globally?
- What additional solutions can be presented to tackle the debt crisis?

Panellists:

- **Ms. Shari Spiegel,** Director of the Financing for Development Office, UN DESA
- **Mr. Jason Rosario Braganza**, Executive Director, AFRODAD
- **Ms. Jill Dauchy**, Chief Executive Officer, Potomac Group

11:30–13:00	**International trade for the SDGs: the challenge of poverty eradication through export-led growth**

International trade can help developing countries generate revenue that can contribute to economic growth and lead to the reduction of poverty and financing for sustainable development. Countries in special situations such as the least developed countries (LDCs), small island developing states (SIDS) and landlocked developing countries (LLDCs) remain largely marginalized in international trade due to their limited scale and undiversified nature of their economies, geographical remoteness, lack of access to the sea, major trading ports and world markets, high dependence on external markets, and vulnerability to natural hazards and disasters.

Entire sectors of the global economy, such as financial services and technology, are led by developed countries and a few emerging economies, offering little opportunities for the integration of developing countries which remain largely marginalized. Developing countries continue to face tariff and nontariff barriers to their exports while being pushed to give free rein to foreign investors by relaxing their own regulatory environments. Correspondent banking, a lack of an enabling business environment and limited access to affordable financing in developing countries also present challenges.

The Pact for the Future states its commitment to “a rules-based, nondiscriminatory, open, fair, inclusive, equitable and transparent multilateral trading system, with the World Trade Organization at its core”. Additional reforms that can take place are the facilitation of accession to the World Trade Organization, especially for developing countries, and the promotion of trade and investment liberalization and facilitation. It is evident that the current Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) does not provide sufficient flexibility to protect industries such as those based on traditional knowledge and handicrafts. The Investor-State Dispute Settlement is often accused of being inherently biased in favor of large multinational enterprises acting against the ability of developing countries to legislate for the public welfare.

Guiding questions:

- How can parliaments help address some of the most important sticking points in the current multilateral trade and investment regime?
- Given the highly competitive global marketplace, how sustainable is the expert-led growth model and can all countries replicate it?

	• How can countries move up the value chain through trade and foreign investments? **Panellists:** • **Mr. Thomas Schnoll,** Permanent Observer of the OECD to the United Nations • **Mr. Juan Jose Martinez Badillo**, Chief, UN Trade and Development, NY Office • **Ms. Melinda St. Louis**, Director, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch
13:00- 15:00	**Lunch break**
15:00–16:45	**Private investments for the SDGs: the role of private long-term investments and of international finance**
	The financing of the SDGs is estimated to range between 2.5 to 4 trillion US dollars over the next five years. While governments can garner investments in infrastructure and services from the public, private investors, with their capacity to tap financial markets, are seen as essential to target 17 of SDG 17. Focused on the "means of implementation", target 17.7 includes a commitment to scale up public-private partnerships (PPPs) to help mobilize private investments. Private business activity, investment and innovation are also included in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The private sector involvement in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda includes PPPs as well as foreign direct investments and private capital mobilization, which have all declined due to the shift to digital business models. It has also led to underinvestment in various sectors, such as energy and infrastructure, and developing countries, particularly countries in special situations including LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS. For private sector investment to improve, there needs to be an equivalent improvement of the business enabling environment, which should include policies on investor and consumer protection and fair competition, as well as structural changes in reshaping private investments. Solutions can include the mobilization of innovative types of private finance, including through blended finance as well as capacity building support for projects and aligning private business and finance with the SDGs. Guiding questions: • How can the private sector be incentivized to invest while establishing mechanisms to avoid negative consequences? • How can public engagement in and oversight of the private sector be strengthened, including through parliaments? **Panellists:** • **Ms. Norine Kennedy**, Senior Vice President for Global Strategy and United Nations Affairs, United States Council for International Business • **Mr. Rahul Malhotra**, Director of UNOPS New York Board and External Relations Office • **Ms Rouguiatou Diallo**, Economic Research Officer, International Trade Union Confederation
16:45 –17:00	**Closing**
	Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU