



# General Assembly

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## Seventy-sixth session

Agenda item 128

### Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

## Summary report of the 2022 parliamentary hearing

### Note by the President of the General Assembly

The present document contains the summary report of the 2022 parliamentary hearing, held in New York on 17 and 18 February 2022, which is circulated pursuant to General Assembly resolution [65/123](#).



## **Building political support and inclusive responses to sustainable recovery**

**Summary report of the 2022 parliamentary hearing, jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Office of the President of the General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters, 17 and 18 February 2022**

### **Opening session**

1. The 2022 parliamentary hearing served as an opportunity for parliamentarians to discuss how to create the political will to build a world that is sustainable, inclusive and just. Participants shared best practices on tackling inequality, working towards gender parity, ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, minorities, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, and addressing climate change by opposing the interests of industrial conglomerates.
2. The hearing included five panel discussions that featured a mix of parliamentarians, ambassadors and United Nations officials, and a special briefing on the role of parliaments at the United Nations for a more effective multilateralism to address global challenges. The hearing brought together some 160 members of parliament from 63 countries.
3. The President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, Abdulla Shahid, said that, to build a sustainable recovery following the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the world needed strong leadership and collaboration. Having witnessed first-hand what people could achieve through joint efforts and ingenuity, including on renewable energy and vaccines, he had based his presidency on a message of hope. Nevertheless, for maximum impact, everyone must work together to generate political will and parliamentarians must implement and fund policies that would deliver results for all people.
4. The President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Duarte Pacheco, reminded parliamentarians to hold their Governments accountable for the commitments they had made at the United Nations. To solve the current challenges, there was a need to combine national and global actions, to include youth, women and other marginalized groups, to rethink consumption and production patterns and humankind's relationship with nature, and to turn to new solutions that went beyond "business as usual".

### **I. Growing economic inequalities as a threat to sustainable development: drivers and possible solutions (panel 1)**

5. There is an urgent need to rethink the way our economies work in order to prevent the extreme concentration of wealth and address widening inequalities, which have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Parliamentarians must focus on long-term solutions instead of short-term measures dictated by electoral cycles. They should use the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a framework for building inclusive and sustainable economies. They must hold Governments accountable for implementing policies and ensure that they are properly funded.
6. To address inequality, Member States and parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:
  - (a) Consider raising taxes on multinational companies, which pay almost no tax by taking advantage of loopholes in the tax system. A unitary tax system, for

instance, would allow every country to treat subsidiaries as separate companies and tax them based on their share of profits, employment and assets in that country, thus preventing the practice of profit shifting to avoid high tax jurisdictions. Multinational companies should be taxed at a minimum rate of 25 per cent, which is the median of global rates;

(b) Combat tax evasion on a global scale, including by instituting national asset registries and sharing them with other countries so that the world's wealthiest people cannot park their money in tax havens;

(c) Consider the issuance of more special drawing rights, the reserve asset of the International Monetary Fund. Special drawing rights liquidity accounts for only about 7 per cent of global liquidity. Rich countries that do not use special drawing rights can recycle them to a climate trust that funds climate mitigation projects, and even poor countries that do not use them could add to their reserves and improve their borrowing capacity;

(d) Regulate global capital flows to incentivize green investments and disincentivize brown investments;

(e) Address social and economic imbalances that perpetuate inequality. This includes valuing and distributing the burden of care, which falls overwhelmingly to women. A system has been proposed to compensate women for caring for children, older adults, the sick and persons with disabilities;

(f) Look at inequalities beyond income and wealth. People also care about health, education and opportunities for their children, which is why parliamentarians must look past economic growth as a means of improving people's livelihoods;

(g) Demand vaccine equity (through measures such as strengthening the World Health Organization) so that vaccines and treatments for COVID-19 and other viruses are available to everyone. Pandemics cannot end until they are eradicated everywhere. Serious consideration should be given to waiving patent rights relating to vaccine formulas and vaccine production know-how, so that distribution can be rapidly scaled up to enable vaccines to be administered quickly to everyone who is eligible;

(h) Consider new modes of global governance and public investment that would reflect justice and inclusion instead of perpetuating existing imbalances. To combat inequality and help the poor, the creation of a world plan for fraternity and well-being has been proposed, which would be funded voluntarily by the world's richest people, corporations and countries. Parliamentarians must consider new ways of taxing and regulating digital and social media companies;

(i) Ensure that private companies are socially responsible, pay fair wages, respect workers' rights and the environment and give back to the communities in which they operate;

(j) Encourage wealthy countries to help developing countries to gain access to the financial resources they need to stimulate growth. Support countries that host large numbers of refugees. Use multilateralism and international cooperation to help Member States eliminate inequality within and between nations.

## **II. Building on the past to improve the future: youth inclusion and the need for intergenerational justice (panel 2)**

7. Young people make up 1.2 billion of the world's population and 85 per cent of them live in developing countries. While more than half of the globe's residents are

under the age of 30, only 2 per cent of members of parliament are under 30 years of age, according to IPU. A new social contract is needed to ensure that young people are included in politics and decision-making bodies and are given the tools they need to thrive.

8. To achieve youth inclusion, Member States and parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) Set quotas for youth participation at all levels of government through constitutional amendments, legislative measures and new laws. Enforce quotas through financial penalties, sanctions and other means;

(b) Lower the minimum age of eligibility for voting and running for political office;

(c) Ensure political bodies and other decision-making institutions are:

(i) Transparent and accountable: young people do not approve of the concentration of power in the hands of a few;

(ii) Safe: youth want to speak truth to power and share their experiences;

(iii) Equitable, inclusive and diverse: young people expect institutions to include migrants, refugees, women, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons and other marginalized groups;

(d) Rely on existing resources, such as the IPU campaign *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!*, which contains six pledges to make parliaments younger, and the Secretary-General's proposal for a "youth in politics" index, which aims to make decision-making more diverse and representative;

(e) Include youth in decision-making bodies and delegations, along with considering the following suggestions:

(i) Forming and supporting bodies, forums and institutions dedicated to young people, such as youth ministries and assemblies;

(ii) Sending at least one parliamentarian under 40 years of age from each IPU member to the 2023 parliamentary hearing at the United Nations;

(iii) Placing youth at the centre of plans on development, humanitarian assistance, peace and security, and human rights;

(iv) Working to include youth not only in political bodies but also in boards of private companies, citizen associations and trade groups;

(f) Build trust between youth and political institutions by addressing issues that matter to young people, including climate change, inequality and diversity;

(g) Provide free and quality education for all. This includes comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education and services, so that young people can make informed decisions about their bodies and lives;

(h) Prioritize mental health services, particularly in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many children and young people have missed school and been unable to socialize with their peers because of the pandemic, which has taken a mental toll;

(i) Tackle disenfranchisement by focusing on job creation. Support internship, employment, entrepreneurship and professional training programmes;

(j) Engage youth in the work of changing social norms, behaviours and laws that contribute to inequality.

### **III. Leaving no one behind: the rights of indigenous peoples, migrants, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups (panel 3)**

9. In addition to women and youth, other marginalized voices continue to be excluded from social and political life. These include indigenous people, migrants, refugees, persons with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer persons and ethnic and religious minorities. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on these groups, including higher death rates and increased violence against some minority groups. Governments must work to reach these individuals, give them a seat at the table and ensure that their rights are fully realized. States that promote minority rights are more likely to remain tolerant and stable.

10. To address the needs of vulnerable groups, Member States and parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) Use a human rights-centred approach, which provides the instruments and framework for serving all individuals, including the vulnerable. Oversee the Government's role in meeting existing obligations: ensure that they are reflected in national policies and are properly funded;

(b) Gather research and data on COVID-19 cases and disaggregate by factors such as ethnic origin, race and gender. Use targeted measures to reach those groups. For example, emergency aid could target minorities in the informal economy that are most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic;

(c) Ensure that people without identification, social security or health insurance can access services. Share information with minority communities in their languages. As part of outreach, use radio, public service announcements and other means of communication;

(d) Ensure governmental declarations on COVID-19 are not used to negatively target minority groups or individuals. Prevent and combat human rights violations, including hate speech, discrimination, violence and online harassment;

(e) Promote respect for diversity and human dignity. Address gaps in laws and legislation regarding issues such as discrimination, xenophobia and racism, and adopt proactive policies to address these issues. To help create responsible and tolerant citizens, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be distributed to secondary students and its significance taught in class;

(f) Avoid rushing back to fiscally conservative policies. Governments have enacted more than 3,800 social protection measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, in part to help with the loss of an equivalent of 255 million jobs, most of them in the informal sector. Those measures should not be lifted prematurely;

(g) To tackle social exclusion, focus on jobs. The Secretary-General's recently launched platform, the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for a Just Transition, is aimed at creating employment opportunities, particularly in the green and digital economies;

(h) Use quotas to boost the participation of minorities in political bodies and the civil service. Empower minorities, migrants, refugees and others to become active members of society;

(i) Scale up successful partnerships, such as the Indigenous Navigator, which allows indigenous peoples to collect data and monitor the realization of their rights, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Global Business and Disability Network, which brings multinational companies and disability networks together, and the ILO

Fair Recruitment Initiative, which works with migrant worker organizations to promote fair practices;

(j) Build trust between people and institutions to create a new social contract that works for everyone. Work with all stakeholders, including state and tribal governments, faith-based and community organizations, philanthropy, academia and private industry;

(k) Recognize communal land ownership, which is an important part of indigenous heritage.

#### **IV. Gender equality in decision-making as a key to sustainable recovery: the litmus test of inclusive politics (panel 4)**

11. The COVID-19 pandemic has widened existing gender gaps, and women continue to be underrepresented in most decision-making bodies. Only one in four members of parliament is a woman and, according to IPU, only five parliaments have 50 per cent or more women representatives. While there is no country in which women enjoy equal pay for equal work or participate equally in the workforce, countries that have come the closest to achieving equality have more productive economies as well as healthier and happier citizens. Gender-balanced parliaments translate into gender-responsive policies, which in turn lead to economic growth, environmental sustainability and improved outcomes in areas such as health, education, and peace and security.

12. To address gender inequality, Member States and parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) Use legislative quotas to increase women's participation at all levels of government. Ensure quotas are ambitious, properly enforced and aim for full gender parity. Include this in the goals for task forces set up to address the pandemic, in which women account for only one in four participants on average;

(b) Ensure equal access to education for girls and women. Women cannot become political leaders if girls are not educated;

(c) Eliminate the discrimination that still exists in many laws. Insist on laws and policies that tackle issues such as the gender pay gap and gender-based violence;

(d) Address violence against women in politics. This has been amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially online. Recent years have also seen a rise in backlash politics against women politicians. Harassment and violence against women must be legislated against and the perpetrators held accountable. Parliaments must be safe and gender-sensitive so that women can participate without the threat of sexism, discrimination or violence;

(e) Redistribute the burden of childcare and housework, given that women do three times more work in the home than men. Provide paid parental leave and affordable childcare, which are critical for ensuring women's participation in working and political life;

(f) Promote gender equality at home, work and in public life, through, for example:

(i) The participation of men in childcare and household duties, and the promotion of positive masculinity to help change harmful mindsets and behaviours;

- (ii) In view of parliaments' visible role in society, male parliamentarians must set an example by being strong allies in the quest for equality, speaking up on the issue and supporting gender quotas and other policies. Parliamentarians should visit schools and workplaces to elevate the fight for gender equality;
- (iii) Helping others to understand that gender equality does not only benefit girls and women, but also boys, men, economies and entire societies;
- (g) Implement gender-responsive policies and budgeting across legislative areas and sectors. Engage all stakeholders, including academia, civil society and private businesses. Follow guidance from the United Nations Population Fund and IPU and work with United Nations country teams;
- (h) Implement and fund existing resolutions, treaties and conventions that focus on eliminating discrimination, gender inequality and violence against women and girls;
- (i) Focus on maintaining peace and conflict prevention. Instability, conflict and war force women to leave school and work to support their families and communities. Every pandemic, conflict and crisis slows down progress on gender equality and sets society back. Prioritize people over weapons, and pass budgets accordingly.

#### **Special briefing**

#### **Parliaments at the United Nations, for a more effective multilateralism to address global challenges**

One way to devise effective policy solutions for global problems is by strengthening multilateralism. That is the political mission of IPU at the United Nations.

IPU and parliamentarians bring people's voices to the United Nations, thus enriching the deliberations that lead to key treaties and conventions. IPU has a seat at the United Nations and speaks on behalf of parliaments. It also builds political support for the United Nations and helps parliaments to implement the commitments made by their Governments at the United Nations. IPU plays a central role in fostering multilateralism, international cooperation and dialogue, which are greatly needed to confront today's complex global problems.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of people living in poverty has increased, the gender gap has widened and income inequality between and within countries has grown. Many parliaments have been partnering with the United Nations to address these challenges and work towards a sustainable recovery. In his report entitled "Our Common Agenda" (A/75/982), the Secretary-General emphasized the importance of enhancing parliamentary input into the work of the United Nations and provided a framework for strengthening multilateral agreements and building a new social contract for future generations.

## **V. Making good on climate change commitments: the people versus organized interests (panel 5)**

13. While public pressure for strong measures to combat the climate crisis has been growing, the world is still heading towards global temperature increases that will have an irreversible effect on people and the environment. Political will is needed to

urgently respond to climate change and to support countries that need help with transitioning to green energy and greener economies. Unless production and consumption patterns are transformed to significantly reduce the current ecological footprint, future generations will experience more fires, floods, famine and other devastating effects of climate change.

14. To address the climate crisis, Member States and parliamentarians should consider the following recommendations:

(a) Adopt policies to phase out fossil fuels, as well as public subsidies and financing for their exploration and production. Fossil fuels account for three-quarters of global greenhouse gas emissions and 80 per cent of global energy supply. Suggested measures include:

(i) Helping people to understand that wind and solar energy are the cheapest form of energy supply in most markets;

(ii) Rethinking budgeting and reforming international finance systems to gear all investments towards sustainable development and supporting people during the transition to a green economy. Work with asset owners, managers, banks and others to cut fossil fuel investments and prioritize green energy;

(iii) Following best practices and joining existing efforts, such as the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance created by Costa Rica and Denmark, the world's first diplomatic initiative focused on keeping oil and gas in the ground. In addition, 40 countries and institutions have launched a commitment to end international public finance for fossil fuels by the end of 2022;

(iv) Breaking the fossil fuel industry's hold on political power, which it acquires through campaign contributions and lobbying and then uses to reap benefits through tax breaks, subsidies and supportive policies. Regulate lobbying to make it more transparent and ethical;

(b) Listen to underrepresented voices, such as those of indigenous people, women, youth, persons with disabilities, minorities and others living in the most impacted communities, and include them in decision-making;

(c) Invest in a sustainable blue economy and life below water, as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 14. More than 90 per cent of the planet's living space is water. Oceans will absorb 90 per cent of the heat from global temperature increases, affecting everything from coral reefs to marine life. Changing conditions on land means that seas and oceans will need to provide food, renewable energy and other resources;

(d) Draft short- and long-term climate policies. Clearly communicate about the costs and benefits of legislation and ensure citizens are informed. To educate consumers, push for products to include information about their carbon footprint;

(e) Take a multi-level, system-wide and cross-sectoral approach by:

(i) Focusing on the bottom-up principle by starting locally, and work with all levels of government. Local and regional authorities are responsible for more than 70 per cent of climate mitigation strategies and 65 per cent of public investment, so they can play a strong role in shaping climate policy;

(ii) Using a system-wide strategy to include all actors, including producers, consumers, states and all levels of government;

(iii) Pursuing climate commitments in all sectors that are significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, including industry, agriculture and waste, forest and nature, transport, and buildings and construction work;

(f) Focus on accountability. Governments and private companies have made climate pledges and commitments, but better oversight and harsher penalties are needed to ensure they are meeting the targets;

(g) Prioritize proposals that are efficient, inclusive, smart and targeted. This means ensuring that policies are cost- and resource-efficient, accessible to everyone, and take a targeted approach;

(h) Stress that climate change is not just about the future, but the present. It is affecting everything from our health to the environment, and has led to more frequent and severe floods, droughts, fires, storms, cyclones and other life-threatening crises;

(i) Consider constitutional amendments and other tools to prioritize environmental protection in laws, legislation, regulations and budgets;

(j) Link climate policies to social and economic policies to ensure that the most vulnerable individuals are not negatively affected. Align COVID-19 pandemic recovery efforts with climate-friendly policies.

## **VI. Conclusion**

15. The hearing emphasized the need to build trust between individuals and Governments, protect the world's poorest and most vulnerable people and create a new social contract that is just and inclusive. Countries should implement a global tax system that taxes the wealthiest people and multinational corporations fairly. Parliamentarians must use quotas and other tools to achieve gender parity. They must also bring young people, indigenous people, persons with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities to the table.

16. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified existing problems and inequalities. Recovery efforts must help usher in a sustainable world. Parliamentarians should work with all stakeholders, including Governments and civil society, to foster partnerships and build synergies. Countries must stop exploiting the planet's finite resources and take more decisive action to fight the climate crisis together.

17. IPU and parliaments play a critical role in fostering multilateralism, which is urgently needed to solve today's pressing global challenges.

## Annex

### List of speakers

Moderator: Anne Marie Goetz, New York University, Center for Global Affairs

#### Day one

##### Opening session

President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, Abdulla Shahid

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Duarte Pacheco

##### Panel 1

##### **Growing economic inequalities as a threat to sustainable development: drivers and possible solutions**

Speaker of the Senate (Mexico), Olga María del Carmen Sánchez Cordero

Permanent Representative of Botswana to the United Nations and President of the Economic and Social Council, Collen Vixen Kelapile

Director of the Human Development Report Office, United Nations Development Programme, Pedro Conçeição

Professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and member of the High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs, Jayati Ghosh

##### Panel 2

##### **Building on the past to improve the future: youth inclusion and the need for intergenerational justice**

Permanent Representative of Cabo Verde to the United Nations, Júlio César Freire de Morais

Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund, Dr. Natalia Kanem

Envoy of the Secretary-General on Youth, Jayatma Wickramanayake (video message)

##### Panel 3

##### **Leaving no one behind: the rights of indigenous peoples, migrants, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups**

Speaker of the House of Representatives (Uruguay), Luis Alfredo Fratti

Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations and Chair of the Second Committee (Economic and Financial Committee) for the seventy-sixth General Assembly, Vanessa Frazier

Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights and Head of the New York Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ilze Brands Kehris

Special Representative of the International Labour Organization to the United Nations in New York, Beate Andrees

**Day two****Panel 4****Gender equality in decision-making as a key to sustainable recovery: the litmus test of inclusive politics**

Member of Parliament (Ukraine) and President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Lesia Vasylenko

Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, Jukka Salovaara

Chief of the Leadership and Governance Section, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), Sabine Freizer

President and Chief Executive Officer, Promundo, Gary Barker

**Special briefing****Parliaments at the United Nations, for a more effective multilateralism to address global challenges**

Secretary-General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Martin Chungong

Member of Parliament (Sweden) and member of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Cecilia Widegren

Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations and Chair of the Group of Friends of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Francisco Duarte Lopes

Assistant Secretary-General for Europe, Central Asia and the Americas, Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, United Nations, Miroslav Jenča

**Panel 5****Making good on climate change commitments: the people versus organized interests**

Member of the Senate (Belgium) and member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, Andries Gryffroy

Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Ocean, Peter Thomson (video message)

Director of the Climate Action Team, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, Anne-Sophie Cerisola

Assistant Secretary-General, Head of the New York Office, United Nations Environment Programme, Ligia Noronha

Executive Director, Oil Change International, Elizabeth Bast

**Closing session**

President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Duarte Pacheco

President of the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session, Abdulla Shahid