



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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**Office of the President
of the General Assembly**
79th Session



Summary report of the 2025 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations: *Scaling up action for the Sustainable Development Goals: Finance, Institutions and Politics*

Jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Office of the President of the General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters

13 and 14 February, 2025

Introduction

1. The 2025 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations (UN) was jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Office of the President of the General Assembly. Approximately 180 parliamentarians from 60 countries attended the hearing.
2. The hearing included seven interactive discussions featuring panels of experts on topics such as international trade, debt, taxation, overseas development assistance (ODA) and private-sector investments. It provided an opportunity for parliamentarians to share best practices, build cooperation, and provide input on ongoing negotiations and in view of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Seville, Spain, from 30 June to 3 July 2025.

Opening session

3. **Mr. Philemon Yang**, President of the UN General Assembly at its 79th session, welcomed the parliamentarians and said that with only five years left, there was an urgent need to implement and fund the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He reminded parliamentarians that they held the legislative, budgetary and oversight powers necessary to turn global commitments into tangible action. In light of the upcoming 4th International Conference on Financing for Development, the moment was ripe to mobilize financing for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), enhance international cooperation, leverage private investment, build political will and effectively engage all stakeholders. The Pact for the Future, adopted in September 2024, provided an opportunity to turbocharge efforts towards achieving the SDGs, and parliamentarians were invited to champion its implementation.

4. **Dr. Tulia Ackson**, President of the IPU, said the IPU had been helping parliaments turn the global SDGs into national plans. However, progress towards the Goals was off track owing to divisive politics, turbulent international relations and a lack of political will. Only one third of parliaments were meaningfully engaged in national SDG progress reports, and many lacked the necessary structures to adequately align their legislative agenda with the SDGs. Parliamentarians must ingrain the SDGs in governmental institutions and focus on financing the SDGs, which was estimated to cost between \$2.5 trillion and \$4 trillion per year over the next five years. Dr. Ackson stressed that, in a world where 20% of the population consumed 80% of the resources, it was possible to fund the SDGs if resources were distributed fairly. She encouraged parliamentarians to prioritize the common good over individual political interests, engage their constituents and focus on actionable recommendations to ensure no one was left behind.
5. Participants took part in a Mentimeter survey, expressing their views on topics such as the need to strengthen multilateralism, address inequities in global debt and tax systems, and incorporate the SDGs in the parliamentary budgetary process.

Panels 1 and 2. The deep challenge of the SDGs: Mobilizing political will; Parliamentary oversight of the SDGs: The unfinished business of institutionalization

6. Panellists noted that the SDGs reflected people's aspirations, advanced people's rights and had the potential to rebuild trust in government. They provided a bold framework to address global challenges such as poverty, social justice and environmental degradation, while fostering peace and prosperity. But a lack of political will remained the biggest obstacle to achieving the SDGs, with other challenges including growing isolationism, retreat from multilateralism despite the global nature of most crises, and financial constraints. With only 17% of the SDGs on track globally and weak national ownership of the SDGs, urgent parliamentary action was needed to accelerate progress and reinforce commitments. Panellists recommended using existing frameworks, including the Pact for the Future, to advance the SDGs.
7. Examples of parliamentary structures that review the SDGs and support public reporting mechanisms that track progress towards the Goals included the following:
 - i. In Uzbekistan, parliamentarians are regularly included in delegations and the voluntary national reviews on the SDGs.
 - ii. Côte d'Ivoire has achieved growth in recent years in part because it has included the SDGs in national development plans and strengthened relationships between the executive branch and parliament.
 - iii. The House of Representatives of Indonesia has developed an SDG monitoring dashboard, which can be used by parliamentarians and constituents to track progress.

- iv. In Qatar, parliamentarians regularly call on ministers to present sustainable development plans and citizens are allowed to make proposals.
8. Panellists said the global financial architecture should be reformed so that it was fit for purpose. This included helping ensure that institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank channelled most money to low- and middle-income countries, and that systems used by credit rating agencies were not burdensome for developing nations. Global historical accountability was needed to recognize countries' role in the climate crisis. Global taxes must fund global goods; these could include taxes on international aviation, shipping, carbon dioxide emissions and financial transactions.

Panellists and parliamentarians offered recommendations to build political will and institutionalize the SDGs through measures such as the following:

- a) Prioritizing goals that resonate with the people in each country and identifying tangible targets that could be achieved during one election term
- b) Working to achieve a fair distribution of resources
- c) Prioritizing people-centric policies, such as those focusing on education, healthcare and basic infrastructure
- d) Working to create peace, security and political stability as key determinants of sustainable development
- e) Establishing parliamentary structures to review and advance the SDGs and support public reporting mechanisms that track progress towards the Goals
- f) Engaging with fellow parliamentarians, government officials, the media and constituents to raise awareness about the SDGs and highlight their importance
- g) Strengthening the budget process with greater transparency and stronger oversight of government expenditures

Panel 3. Development cooperation and the SDGs: Making the most of aid

9. Panellists noted that ODA was crucial for financing the SDGs and could be a lifeline for many developing countries. ODA helped leverage other types of financing, such as blended finance and private investments. It could attract more resources by improving the business environment, boosting tax collection and strengthening the management of public finances. Governments from donor countries must meet their ODA commitments to low-income countries, and parliamentarians should also work to help reduce dependence on foreign aid. Some panellists encouraged calls for a national independent commission to create a new blueprint for aid based on equity, inclusivity and fairness.
10. Panellists said rising isolationism, conflicts and geopolitical tensions were threatening the future of aid. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), aid commitments in 2023 accounted for only half of the recommended gross national income commitment of 0.7%. Beyond increasing resources,

there was a need for improved aid effectiveness, greater national ownership and better results management. Panellists cited examples of aid effectiveness, such as the return on investment achieved by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) of about \$9 for every \$1 invested, the \$300 million value of the Rwanda Green Investment Facility's, which started with \$300,000 of seed money, and the creation of 20,000 jobs for young people in the Democratic of the Republic of the Congo with a \$150,000 investment.

Panellists and parliamentarians offered recommendations for making aid more effective through measures including the following:

- (a) Prioritizing national ownership of aid and building strong relationships with local partners
- (b) Ensuring aid is transparent and results-driven
- (c) Building awareness among constituents, the private sector, civil society and the media about the importance of aid
- (d) Employing tools such as incentives and subsidies to promote projects that are long-term and prioritize sustainable development, climate resilience, and core public goods and services
- (e) Prioritizing multilateral aid channels that are typically less politicized and more cost-effective than bilateral ones

Panel 4. Raising domestic resources for the SDGs: A case for tax reforms

11. Panellists stressed that, in order to scale up progress towards the SDGs, national and international tax systems must be reformed to avoid policies that deepened global inequalities. Multinational corporations used profit shifting, offshoring, tax havens and other mechanisms to avoid paying taxes – measures that, according to the OECD, created as much as \$240 billion in annual revenue losses. Parliamentarians were encouraged to use their oversight authority to spotlight large-scale corporate tax evasion. One example given was that, in 2023, the US Senate Committee on Finance had investigated pharmaceutical companies' tax practices and found that they had reported as much as 75% of their income in foreign subsidiaries. Another cited example was the recent introduction of new country-by-country requirements, by the EU and Australia, with a view to improving oversight of corporations' profit-sharing strategies.
12. Panellists said most tax systems were regressive, focused on labour instead of wealth, and lacked adequate enforcement capacities. Reforms were needed to make tax systems fairer and more equitable while increasing domestic revenues so that States could fund public goods. Parliamentarians were encouraged to use a whole-of-society approach. For example, Jamaica had involved the business sector and civil society in tax reforms in order to eliminate wasteful expenditures and increase domestic revenues.

Parliamentarians were encouraged to use existing organizations, tools and instruments for guidance, including the OECD's Base Erosion and Profit Shifting Action 13, the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, and Tax Inspectors Without Borders.

Panellists and parliamentarians offered recommendations to increase tax revenues and make tax systems fairer and more equitable through measures such as the following:

- (a) Ensuring tax laws and policies are inclusive, transparent and open
- (b) Imposing greater disclosure of the true owners of entities, including trusts, limited liability partnerships and beneficial ownerships
- (c) Enacting laws and policies that prioritize tax collection from high-net-worth individuals
- (d) Regularly reviewing national tax laws and investing in capacity-building for local tax administrations
- (e) Seeking effective taxation and auditing of companies that engage in extractive industries
- (f) Advocating for clarity and transparency in tax laws and guidance, deterring companies from tax avoidance and evasion, and improving compliance
- (g) Using parliamentary oversight to spotlight large-scale corporate tax evasion
- (h) Sharing information with other countries and cooperating on cross-border tax issues, including enforcement
- (i) Pushing for the application of a global minimum tax of 15% for multinational corporations – an OECD proposal that more than 140 countries have committed to
- (j) Demanding greater insight into multinational corporations' profit-shifting strategies in order to properly investigate them and hold them accountable
- (k) Building political will – nationally and internationally – to make tax systems more sustainable, inclusive and focused on public goods

Panel 5. The debt crisis and the SDGs: Proposals for sustainable solutions

- 13. Panellists warned that the world was facing a debt crisis, with 3.3 billion people living in countries that were spending more on interest payments than on education or health. Parliamentarians and panellists stressed the need to make the global debt architecture more people-focused and sensitive to low-income countries' vulnerabilities.
- 14. Stronger principles were needed to ensure responsible lending, borrowing and debt sustainability. These included adding climate-resilient clauses and mechanisms to address external shocks. Since there was no single mechanism or bankruptcy court for States, restructuring was often done too late and took too long, which drove up costs and escalated debt burdens. Panellists said there was no easy way to coordinate creditors or identify which ones to prioritize, adding to costs and delays. A sovereign debt restructuring mechanism was urgently needed to set norms, correct power imbalances favouring creditors, and streamline processes. Debt should serve as a catalyst for

productive economic transformation, rather than burdening developing nations. Examples of financial innovation included the following:

- i. The \$750 million deal between the Dominican Republic and the World Bank for climate projects
- ii. The issue of \$2.5 billion in green bonds by Qatar
- iii. The African Development Bank's \$2 billion bond for projects promoting sustainability
- iv. The agreement by Portugal to swap the debt of Cabo Verde for environmental investments

Panellists and parliamentarians offered recommendations to address the debt crisis through measures such as the following:

- (a) Assessing countries' borrowing practices, including the legal framework, terms and conditions, who their counterpart is and whether they can negotiate with them
- (b) Updating domestic legislation to include areas such as restructuring and dispute resolution
- (c) Ensuring debt is transparent and aligned with national priorities, and has strong oversight
- (d) Assessing the impact of borrowing to ensure it is used as intended and to measure its societal benefit
- (e) Ensuring that countries do not compromise their decision-making authority and financial independence in any relationship with a creditor or lending institution
- (f) Considering establishing debt management offices, independent of finance ministries and national treasuries, to carry out cost analysis on debt management
- (g) Advocating for the IMF and the World Bank to create fairer lending criteria for developing countries, and for restructuring plans that consider States' ability to pay
- (h) Considering using economic measurements beyond gross domestic product, which has a short-term outlook and does not capture critical indicators such as sustainability and people's well-being
- (i) Promptly engaging in debt restructuring in cases of financial distress
- (j) Considering debt cancellation, debt swaps and other ways to assist developing States
- (k) Helping harness financial innovation, including green financing and other forms of financing that prioritize people, sustainable development and the environment
- (l) Focusing on regional cooperation and supporting regional development banks and institutions
- (m) Strengthening parliamentary oversight of public investment systems

Panel 6. International trade for the SDGs: The challenge of poverty eradication through export-led growth

15. Panellists noted that a small number of developed nations dominated entire sectors of the global economy, while trade agreements often lacked the necessary transparency, without input from parliaments, the public and civil society. While international trade could drive

sustainable growth and poverty reduction, it required multilateral rules, strong domestic policies and capacity-building. Many developing States were trapped in low-value commodity exports that limited their productivity and growth. The global trading system must become more transparent and inclusive, and must prioritize people's human rights, sustainability and the environment.

Panellists and parliamentarians offered recommendations to improve international trade through measures including the following:

- (a) Advocating to transform the global trading system so that it holds multinational corporations accountable and incentivizes respect for workers' rights
- (b) Demanding that government-led negotiations of trade and investment agreements are open and transparent
- (c) Auditing governments' trade agreements to assess whether they benefit the public, contribute to sustainable development, and have been negotiated in an open, inclusive way, free from corruption
- (d) Reducing trade barriers, such as tariffs imposed on developing countries
- (e) Shifting from past models based on exploration and exploitation to ensure trade agreements prioritize people and the planet
- (f) Advocating for reforms of the World Trade Organization to make it more inclusive and fairer to developing countries' needs
- (g) Leveraging existing frameworks, such as the Pact for the Future and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which call for a transparent, equitable and inclusive trading system that prioritizes sustainability, equity and climate resilience
- (h) Prioritizing regional integration and reducing foreign exchange rate pressures by trading in local currencies
- (i) Using reliable data and clear communications to fight misinformation about trade
- (j) Investing in capacity-building and promoting the transfer of knowledge and technology, which requires investment in human capital and infrastructure

Panel 7. Private investments for the SDGs: The role of private long-term investments and of international finance

16. Panellists said that with an estimated financing gap as high as \$4 trillion annually over the next five years, private investments were crucial for achieving the SDGs. Agreements such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement and the Pact for the Future highlighted the need to mobilize private finance and foster public-private partnerships. Many investors were adopting environmental, social and governance criteria, gradually aligning with the SDGs despite political risks in some countries. Successful engagement of the private sector required clear guidelines, an enabling business environment and sound governance institutions. Public-private partnerships must be fair, transparent and accountable, with risks shared between sectors. Morocco had adopted an Investment Charter that provided guarantees for private investors while

imposing obligations in areas such as environmental laws. Algeria had also recently passed legislation to incentivize private-sector investment.

Panellists and parliamentarians offered recommendations to involve the private sector in sustainable development through measures such as the following:

- (a) Prioritizing and rewarding investment quality, not just quantity
- (b) Incorporating decent work, including quantity and quality of jobs, and labour standards, in results measurement
- (c) Applying existing conventions and guidelines, such as the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct*, and those issued by the International Labour Organization
- (d) Centring the human dimension of economic development on anti-discrimination policies, support for living wages, the protection of workers' rights, and investments in green jobs
- (e) Designing clear and enforceable laws and policies to regulate the extraction of natural resources, and to prevent pollution and environmental degradation
- (f) Creating an enabling business environment that is stable, predictable and clear, and includes the rule of law, enforcement and open dialogue
- (g) Working closely with the business community instead of just viewing it as a funding source
- (h) Working with parliamentarians in other countries to raise standards and fight the fragmentation that entices companies to go where standards are lower
- (i) Considering creating national bodies within government to monitor private-sector commitments, rather than relying on self-reporting or external auditing, which is susceptible to conflicts of interest
- (j) Ensuring the availability of data that is of high quality and segregated by various indicators
- (k) Enhancing engagement with the UN by meeting with the Resident Coordinators and exploring partnership opportunities
- (l) Creating a robust and empowered public sector, where public finance remains the driver of development and provides public goods and services
- (m) Ensuring trade unions play an active role in designing and monitoring financing agreements

Closing session

Dr. Ackson praised parliamentarians' engagement at the hearing and expressed gratitude for the participation of the President of the UN General Assembly and several high-level UN officials. She reiterated that most conflicts and crises facing the world were human-made and solvable, and that the SDGs were attainable. If the international community raised \$7 trillion in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a similar effort could be directed towards sustainable development.

Dr. Ackson said the hearing had underscored the interconnected nature of SDG finance, including aid, taxes, debt, trade and private investments. She called on parliamentarians to push for more transparency, inclusion and oversight of global financial systems and to ensure that policies and budgets were people-centred and development-driven. People cared about healthcare, education and the environment and it was up to parliaments to prioritize, fund and implement relevant policies.

Dr. Ackson encouraged parliamentarians to embrace innovation and creativity, work closely with the UN, and leverage multilateralism to restore fairness, build trust and tackle global challenges.

Annex: List of speakers

Moderator: Mr. Dan Dunskey, journalist

Day one

Opening session

Mr. Philémon Yang, President of the UN General Assembly

Dr. Tulia Ackson, President of the IPU

Panel 1. The deep challenge of the SDGs: Mobilizing political will

Ms. Nelly Mutti, Speaker of the National Assembly, Zambia

Mr. Guy Ryder, Under-Secretary-General for Policy, UN

Mr. Jeffrey Sachs, President, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network

Panel 2. Parliamentary oversight of the SDGs: The unfinished business of institutionalization

Mr. Adama Bictogo, Speaker of the National Assembly, Côte d'Ivoire

Mr. Ulugbek Lapasov, Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the UN

Ms. Marina Ponti, Global Director, UN SDG Action Campaign

Panel 3. Development cooperation and the SDGs: Making the most of aid

Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa, Permanent Representative of Nepal to the UN

Ms. Susan Brown, Assistant Secretary-General and Director, Bureau for External Engagement and Advocacy, UNDP

Ms. Nilima Gulrajani, Principal Research Fellow, Development and Public Finance Team, ODI Global

Panel 4. Raising domestic resources for the SDGs: A case for tax reforms

Mr. Navid Hanif, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA)

Mr. Ian Gary, Director, Financial Accountability and Corporate Transparency (FACT) Coalition, and member of the Global Alliance for Tax Justice

Ms. Marlene Nembhand Parker, Deputy Commissioner General, Legal Services Division, and Chief Tax Counsel, Tax Administration Jamaica

Day two

Panel 5. The debt crisis and the SDGs: Proposals for sustainable solutions

Ms. Shari Spiegel, Director, Financing for Development Office, UN DESA

Mr. Jason Rosario Braganza, Executive Director, African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD)

Ms. Jill Dauchy, Chief Executive Officer, Potomac Group

Panel 6. International trade for the SDGs: The challenge of poverty eradication through export-led growth

Mr. Thomas Schnoll, Permanent Observer of the OECD to the UN

Mr. Juan Jose Martinez Badillo, Chief, UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) New York Office

Ms. Melinda St. Louis, Director, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch

Panel 7. Private investments for the SDGs: The role of private long-term investments and of international finance

Mr. Hugo Carneiro, Member of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal

Ms. Norine Kennedy, Senior Vice President for Global Strategy and United Nations Affairs, United States Council for International Business (USCIB)

Ms. Rouguiatou Diallo, Economic Research Officer, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)

Closing session

Dr. Tulia Ackson, President of the IPU