



British Group Inter-Parliamentary Union Online Newsletter: 6 October 2020

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Women: What can parliaments do?

Lead the Way!



VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS: IPU SDG 5 VIDEOS ON GENDER INEQUALITY

Watch the [third](#) and [fourth](#) in a series of short videos on the Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality. One is a video on legislation for gender equality looks at how countries can achieve full gender equality, something that none of them have done until now. The second shares some shocking facts about violence against women and outlines steps that parliaments can take against this scourge.

Also watch the [first](#) and [second](#) videos in this series created as part of a video project between the IPU, Arizona State University, Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, the Council of Women World Leaders, Equality Now, Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS), Represent Women, United Nations, UN Women, Women Political Leaders, and the World Bank.

BGIU CHAIR MEETS HER KNESSET COUNTERPART

On 16 September, BGIU Chair, Harriett Baldwin MP, had a virtual meeting with her counterpart as Head of the Israeli delegation to the IPU, Avi Dichter MK, who also chairs the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in the Knesset.

Both former Ministers in their respective national governments had taken up the role of leading their national IPU groups earlier this year and the UK and Israel share membership of the 47-member Twelve Plus Group of the IPU.

Ms Baldwin MP also conveyed the congratulations of UK parliamentarians to Israel on the major diplomatic breakthrough the day before with a ceremony in Washington in which Israel was able to normalise diplomatic ties with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

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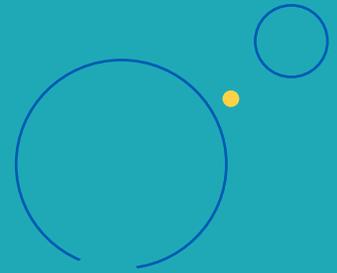
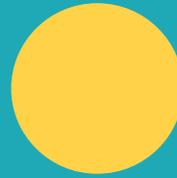
COVID-19 AND DEMOCRACY: CAN PARLIAMENTS COME TO THE RESCUE?

During the pandemic, democratic processes have been under assault in some countries. Elections have been postponed, courts have only dealt with urgent cases, individual freedoms have been curtailed and autocrats have used the pandemic to make power grabs that have sometimes side-lined parliaments. During lockdowns, some parliaments have faced security, technology and procedure challenges and have only been able to operate in a limited way.

Even before the pandemic, democracy was losing popularity. Across the globe, more and more citizens are dissatisfied with their democracies – from 47.9 per cent in the mid-1990s to 57.5 per cent in 2019.

However, democracy is still in relatively good shape and is by far the preferred form of government on all continents according to some studies.

The [IPU with partners convened an event](#) to ask can parliaments learn from the past six months to become stronger and more effective institutions that impose checks and balances on executive powers to better serve the people? [See the recording of this IPU event.](#)



“Can parliaments learn from the past six months to become stronger and more effective institutions that impose checks and balances on executive powers to better serve the people?”





UN RESOLUTION RECOGNISES KEY ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS TO COMBAT COVID-19

The [latest resolution](#) on the interaction between the United Nations, parliaments and the IPU has just been adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The resolution, co-sponsored by [76 UN Member States](#), reaffirms the commitment of all parties to continue to bridge the implementation gap between international commitments and national laws and budgets.

The resolution recognizes the important role played by the IPU and parliaments in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It particularly notes the work of the IPU to promote universal health coverage and address public health emergencies. It also calls for relevant bodies of the United Nations to work with the IPU in this regard.

This is the latest of a long series of resolutions to guide interaction between the IPU, parliaments and the UN since 1995. The resolutions provide the UN system and the IPU with a framework to include a parliamentary component to major UN processes. This in turn ensures that parliamentarians, and the people they represent, are heard at the United Nations. It also helps to strengthen the role of parliaments in international negotiations.

The 2020 resolution recognizes the IPU's work on various issues, including democracy and the rule of law, human rights, gender equality and youth empowerment. It calls for closer cooperation between the UN and the IPU to advance the Sustainable Development Goals, as they have been set further behind by the COVID-19 crisis. It underscores the importance for UN country teams to develop a more structured way of working with national parliaments through the IPU.

Find out more about cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations [here](#).

“...The resolution recognizes the important role played by the IPU and parliaments in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.”



IPU & UNDP PUBLISH GUIDELINES FOR PARLIAMENTS ON MANAGING DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reaffirm the right of all people to a decent life, peace and a healthy environment. Parliaments are essential to achieving this ambitious agenda. They play a key role by enacting legislation, adopting national budgets and overseeing how governments implement national and international commitments, including those related to development cooperation. This is particularly important as implementing the 2030 Agenda will require considerably more funding than is currently mobilized, as well as more effective ways for such funding to be allocated and overseen.

Despite the recognition of parliaments' key role in development cooperation, their oversight in this area tends to be weak. The [Guidelines for enhancing the engagement and contribution of parliaments to effective development cooperation](#), co-published with the United Nations Development Programme, aim to remedy this by providing parliamentarians with an understanding of what development cooperation is and how it works, as well as ideas on how parliaments can promote more effective and accountable use of resources, including financial and non-financial aid.

Development cooperation has evolved considerably over the years to include more than traditional aid but also work that governments, parliaments, civil society, business, unions and others do together with the aim of, among other things, raising more domestic revenue, curbing illicit financial flows, or facilitating sounder private and public partnerships. The Guidelines provide important insights into these modalities of development cooperation and how parliaments can help ensure they are consistent with relevant international commitments as well as national priorities.

The Guidelines include a chapter on the [Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation \(GPEDC\)](#) as the leading multi-stakeholder actor helping forge key commitments on development cooperation as well as the basic framework for all development partners to work together at both national and global levels. As a member of the Steering Committee of the GPEDC, the IPU advocates for stronger parliamentary oversight of development cooperation and is looking to engage parliaments in both developed and developing countries in all relevant processes for effective development cooperation.

