



## **HLPF panel discussion on SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions**

**Friday 12 July**

### **Presentation by Hon. Ms Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of the IPU**

Speaking as a politician, political will for action is fundamental. A starting point for building and sustaining political will is to engage parliaments. We are not there yet.

IPU research shows that only 1 in 3 parliaments has been involved to some extent in the preparation of their country's Voluntary National Review (VNR) at this year's HLPF. That is not good enough.

Only half of parliaments report that they have received reports from the government on the SDGs, held debates or organized committee enquiries

There is much more to be done to engage parliaments. A partnership-based approach, including civil society, the private sector and public institutions, is essential.

Another way to build political will is through public pressure. Here again, much remains to be done. We have not yet managed to capture the public imagination about the SDGs. When people in the street start asking their elected representatives what they are doing about the SDGs, then you will see that this is going to enter the political consciousness much faster.

Of course, the work we do every day in parliaments is focused on all the issues covered by the SDGs. Reducing inequalities. Providing the infrastructure for education and healthcare, for good jobs and effective public institutions. Ensuring access to justice for all.

What is missing is a compelling narrative that connects these fundamental public policy objectives into a story that people can understand. We need to invest more in creating this narrative, in connecting the people and building shared sense of purpose to reach the goals that we have adopted.

I won't deny that parliaments also need to take a hard look at how they themselves can embody the principles of effectiveness, transparency and accountability. How they can be ever more inclusive, and help to rebuild the trust between citizens and their representatives.

Again, we are not there yet. Less than one in four parliamentarians is a woman. The proportion of MPs under 40 has increased from 14.2 per cent in 2016 to 15.5 per cent in 2018. Parliaments are slowly changing to become closer to the image of the societies that they represent. The IPU is working to support parliaments in their efforts to accelerate the pace of change.

This year the IPU celebrates its 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary, making it the world's oldest multilateral organization. This is a reminder that change does not always come quickly, and that some problems take time to solve. But one lesson from politics is that change is always possible - if you have clear objectives, you are open to building partnerships and majorities in favour of change, and have strong public support. That's why I am optimistic that it is still possible to make progress towards the goals that we have set.