

**OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY 2015 AUTUMN MEETING**

**Session 3: Development of democratic institutions, human rights,  
freedom of media, religious tolerance, gender equality**

**Key Note address by Ms. Beate Trankmann,  
UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative,  
17 September 2015, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**

Chairperson, M. le Sénateur Alain Neri, Vice-President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Your Excellency, Mr. Bold L. Member of Parliament of Mongolia

Honorable Members of Parliament,

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In only 10 days, world leaders are scheduled to adopt a new global development framework – the Sustainable Development Goals - to replace the MDGs ending this year. Parliaments around the globe will be instrumental in translating this framework into action and ensuring that countries achieve these goals within their 15 year time frame.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today and to speak to this subject which is so central to the mandate of the United Nations. Let me take the opportunity to acknowledge the important contribution of the OSCE to peace and development. I would also like to thank the Parliament of Mongolia for hosting this important meeting which follows on the heels of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mongolia's parliament.

If approved, the SDGs are the most ambitious global development agenda ever agreed by Governments at the United Nations. They are not only aspirational, they are necessary for the future of our planet and for the benefit of all people of the world. They provide a comprehensive blueprint for political, economic, and social transformation of all countries - developed and developing alike – to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality, address climate change, protect the planet and foster peaceful and inclusive societies.

Strong, democratic governance is seen both as an “enabler” for achieving the SDGs and as a “goal” in and of itself.

The MDGs are the most successful poverty reduction effort of all times. However, there is widespread recognition that in countries where they faced challenges - it is usually a lack of institutional capacity, weak governance, sometimes in combination with the absence of peace and stability, which held progress back.

In response to this recognition a specific Goal – goal 16 - has been introduced into the SDGs which focuses on the creation of peaceful, just and inclusive societies. It aims to promote the respect for human rights and human security; the effective rule of law; good governance and citizens’ participation in decision making as well as transparent, effective and accountable institutions at all levels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The importance of effective institutions is perhaps clearest in countries that are experiencing strong growth, and are looking for ways to translate the benefits into sustainable human development that can be shared by all.

Let me highlight six key points on the role of Parliament in this regard.

**1) Firstly - accountability.** Parliament, by definition any nation's most representative institution, plays a critical role in passing fair and sound laws, as well as overseeing the actions of the Executive. In this way parliament represents a **downward accountability mechanism** that responds to the people of the country. Opinion surveys around the world show an almost universal distrust of political elites. The need for parliaments to be an anchor of accountability and trust is therefore greater than ever, especially in eliminating corruption and promoting transparent campaign financing. The UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) recognizes the key role that parliament can play in these areas, and is an important starting point.

**2) Gender inequality** remains the most pervasive form of inequality around the world. This is evidenced in gender-based violence and discrimination, the gaps in women's access to employment and financial assets and their underrepresentation in political and public life.

Acknowledging and redressing these inequalities of power and resources requires advancing equal representation and participation of women in decision making. The promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women is central to the mandate of the UN and intrinsic to its development approach. When women

are not represented issues such as quality health and education services, child and elderly care are often out of sight and out of mind.

In Mongolia the share of female members of parliament has been increased by more than 3fold between the last two elections to now 14.5%. Some more effort is needed to reach to global average of 22% and the MDG target of 30%. The ongoing reform of the electoral and political party law offers an important opportunity to further strengthen women's political representation and the UN would like to invite political party leaders to follow through on their encouraging commitments to provide women with winnable seats.

**3) A vibrant civil society**, meaningful dialogue and **engagement with citizens** are crucial to inclusive policy making. The protection of civic space and adequate procedures to allow for public participation in legislative processes not only makes for better solutions to complex problems but also guarantees the representation of interests of otherwise marginalized groups. This is at the core of the democratic idea and is key to addressing inequality, which is so pervasive in many of our societies.

At this meeting, I would like to congratulate the Government of Mongolia for its recent efforts towards increased citizen participation in the state affairs. The Parliament of Mongolia has recently passed a law on drafting, submitting and implementing legislation, the main thrust of which is to increase the quality of the legislative process through consultation and public scrutiny. UNDP is honored to have provided technical support in the preparation of this law.

**4)** In building successful **open societies**, guaranteed access to information is a most critical element. Freedom of speech and freedom of association also play a crucial part. Citizens should be able to discuss the issues of the day, challenge the media and government, and, when they see fit, register their dissenting views in peaceful demonstrations. In turn, those in positions of public trust and authority should listen to citizens' concerns. Many parliaments have built in procedures for this purpose that systematize citizen input to their lawmaking and oversight roles.

**5)** The Parliament - as a body that represents the different stakeholders and interests groups in a country - has an important **conflict prevention and resolution** function. This can include finding the path to mitigate religious and ethnic tensions, brokering consensus amongst competing demands over natural resources and so on. Countries that do not have a functioning Parliament often face persistent conflicts and tensions that become a main driver of development failure and regression. The key here is that Parliament has to be truly representational.

**6)** Parliament has a key role in ensuring that all people enjoy their full **human rights**. This role includes overseeing the implementation of the international human rights treaties and conventions and making national law consistent with these obligations. Many countries now have parliamentary subcommittees that specifically focus on human rights. The Universal Peer Review that the previous speaker talked about in the context of Mongolia provides an excellent opportunity for constructive dialogue to improve countries' human rights situations and we hope that Parliaments can play a bigger role in these dialogues. Protecting peoples' rights is a key ingredient to making development inclusive.

Before closing let me say a few words about the UN and how we work with Parliament. Parliament is a key partner and stakeholder for the entire UN. UNDP for example supports Parliaments in over 70 countries to help them fulfill their oversight role more effectively and make them more representative. In Mongolia and other countries, the UN works closely with the Parliament in providing advice and support with regards to reforms across various sectors. UNDP also supports Parliaments in strengthening their essential law making function, improving research and policy analysis capacities, enhancing two-way communications between elected representatives and citizens, and utilizing ICT solutions in these communications.

As highlighted in my previous points, it is evident that Parliaments around the world have a major role in making the SDGs a reality. They will need to ensure that the necessary enabling laws for implementation of the agenda are passed and that Ministers and officials are held to account for national progress against the Goals. They will also need to put in place adequate resource allocations from public budgets for achievement of the SDGs and scrutinize the efficient and transparent use of funds towards the intended objectives in national and local budgets. And, in representing those who elected them, parliaments can ensure an ongoing dialogue with citizens and civil society on the development goals and their progress.

The UN system stands ready to assist Parliaments in the implementation of the new post 2015 sustainable development agenda at country level.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The SDGs present a huge opportunity to move the world to a different quality of development – one that is equal, creates jobs and does not harm the planet. This will require the involvement of all of us.

We are the first generation that can end poverty and hunger. We are also likely to be the last generation that can save our planet.

Thank you!