

Canadian Group  
Inter-Parliamentary Union



Groupe canadien  
Union interparlementaire

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## **Report of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

### **Parliamentary Forum at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

**New York, New York, United States of America**

**July 16, 2024**

## Report

**The Honourable Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain** and **the Honourable David McGuinty, P.C., M.P.**, President of the Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, attended the Parliamentary Forum at the United Nations (UN) High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development in New York, United States of America, from 15 to 16 July, 2024. Organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the Parliamentary Forum took place on July 16, 2024, at UN headquarters. During the mission, Senator Saint-Germain and Mr. McGuinty also held meetings with other participants, subject matter experts and IPU officers, attended side events related to the HLPF, and met with representatives of the Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN in New York.

### THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Established in 1889, the [IPU](#) is the international organization of national parliaments of sovereign states. The IPU is the focal point for global parliamentary dialogue, working for peace and co-operation as well as for the establishment of representative democracy. To this end, it:

- fosters contacts, coordination, and the exchange of experiences among parliamentarians of all member parliaments;
- considers questions of international interest and expresses its views on relevant issues in order to bring about action by parliaments and parliamentarians;
- contributes to the defence and promotion of human rights, which are essential aspects of parliamentary democracy and development; and
- contributes to better knowledge of the working of representative institutions, and to the strengthening and development of their means of action<sup>1</sup>.

The IPU's activities are pursued according to its [Strategy 2022–2026](#), which was adopted in November 2021 during the 143rd Assembly in Madrid, Spain.

At the time of the Parliamentary Forum, 180 national parliaments were members of the IPU. The organization also had 15 associate members, including the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Assembly of La Francophonie and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

### PARLIAMENTARY FORUM AT THE HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The IPU's Parliamentary Forum at the HLPF on Sustainable Development is an annual event. It provides a parliamentary perspective on the 10-day long intergovernmental HLPF organized annually under the auspices of the UN's Economic and Social Council<sup>3</sup>. With a different theme each year, the HLPF promotes focused dialogue and consultation

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<sup>1</sup> See Interparliamentary Union (IPU), "[About us](#)"; and IPU, "[Statutes and Rules](#)".

<sup>2</sup> IPU, [Members](#).

<sup>3</sup> The [Economic and Social Council](#) (ECOSOC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations (UN) established by the UN Charter. It is primarily dedicated to advancing sustainable development in the context of its three dimensions: economic, social and environmental.

among UN members and various stakeholders about sustainable development generally and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) specifically. It is one of several UN platforms that regularly review progress on implementing the SDGs by the 2030 deadline as well as offer opportunities for exchange of best practices<sup>4</sup>. When conducting such reviews, these platforms use information submitted by UN members through the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process. Canada presented its [second VNR](#) to the HLPF in July 2023.

The Parliamentary Forum reinforces the IPU's commitment to the SDGs, the realization of which is central to the organization's promotion of peace, democracy and development. Accordingly, sustainable development is a prominent theme in the IPU's work and one it feels is best served by multilateralism. The IPU's Strategy 2022–2026 demonstrates the organization's commitment to harnessing multilateralism to meet the SDGs in various ways, including through the importance it places on its strategic objective, "Catalysing collective parliamentary action." More broadly, the strategy states that the IPU aims to "further strengthen the parliamentary dimension of multilateralism and global governance including the voice of parliaments at the United Nations and other multilateral organizations" in order to "accelerate ... multilateral policy solutions to key global issues."

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## **A. The 2024 Parliamentary Forum at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

Parliamentarians from approximately 40 countries attended the [2024 Parliamentary Forum at the HLPF](#) held on July 16, 2024. The theme of the Forum was "Governance deficits and climate disasters: The case for parliamentary action." Participants had the opportunity to discuss the role of parliamentarians in accelerating the implementation of the SDGs in two separate sessions:

- [SDG 16](#): Investing in parliaments as key institutions of governance; and
- [SDG 13](#): Scaling-up adaptation and climate finance for a sustainable and resilient world.

The programme of the meeting and other accompanying documents are available on the IPU website.

### **1. Canadian Activities at the 2024 Parliamentary Forum**

**Senator Saint-Germain** and **Mr. McGuinty** attended the Parliamentary Forum's first session, SDG 16: Investing in parliaments as key institutions of governance. IPU

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<sup>4</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 goals established in the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), a document adopted as a resolution of the UN General Assembly on September 25, 2015. The SDGs are accompanied by 169 targets and over 230 indicators aimed at ending poverty, reducing inequalities, protecting the environment and setting the world on a more sustainable path by 2030. The UN Secretary-General also releases annual reports on progress regarding the implementation of the SDGs. In addition, the SDGs are reviewed by the heads of state and government of UN members every four years at an [SDG Summit](#) under the auspices of the UN General Assembly.

<sup>5</sup> IPU, [IPU 2022-2026 Strategy](#), p. 17.

President Tulia Ackson opened the Parliamentary Forum by presenting the introductory remarks. The session then consisted of a panel of three speakers, namely:

- Senator José García Ruminot, Speaker of the Chilean Senate;
- Mr. Arvinn Gadgil, Director of the Policy Center for Governance at the UN Development Programme; and
- Ms. Ana Patricia Munoz, Executive Director at the International Budget Partnership.

The session was chaired by Ms. Petra Bayr, member of the National Council of Austria, and generated various recommendations, which can be found in the [summary report](#) of the meeting.

**Mr. McGuinty** chaired the second panel, SDG 13: Scaling-up adaptation and climate finance for a sustainable and resilient world. In his opening remarks, Mr. McGuinty stated that he was pleased to be at the HLPF, as over 20 years ago, before his election to the House of Commons, he was the founding president of Canada's first national Sustainable Development Council. He added that, for over 10 years, he was a chief advisor on the issue to the then prime minister. He remarked that climate change is one of the most serious threats facing humankind, with 2023 being the hottest year on record. He added that, while there is no country that is untouched by the impacts of the current climate crisis, developing countries that are the least responsible for climate change are the most affected by its impacts. As well, he emphasized that temperature increases, rising sea levels, more intense storms, and increased flooding and droughts are undermining livelihoods and displacing people around the globe.

Mr. McGuinty noted that Goal 13 of the SDGs aims to promote urgent action to combat climate change, with a particular focus on developing countries. He underlined the point that, despite recent progress in advancing both climate change mitigation and adaptation, the [Global Stocktake](#) that concluded at the 28th UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in December 2023, showed that the world is far off track in achieving the Paris Agreement goals on climate change. He observed that the mobilization of climate finance is seen as critical for accelerating climate action, especially in terms of building the adaptive capacity of countries already experiencing severe impacts from climate change. Mr. McGuinty introduced the three international experts who spoke about these issues, namely:

- Ms. Ligia Noronha, Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the UN Environmental Programme's New York Office;
- Mr. Marc Ó Cathasaigh, a member of the Lower House of Parliament in Ireland; and
- Ms. Jennifer J. Sara, Global Director of the Climate Change Group at the World Bank.

The presentations and subsequent question-and-answer session resulted in a lively exchange on the issue. Representatives from the parliaments of Algeria, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, Poland, Sierra Leone, Viet Nam, and of one international organization contributed to the discussion. The exchange generated various recommendations for

parliamentarians for accelerating progress towards SDG 13 (which can be found in the [summary report](#) of the meeting). They included, among others:

- place stronger emphasis on climate adaptation in national development plans, and ensure governments set and meet ambitious climate commitments, such as those set out in the Paris Agreement;
- increase climate investments, work to mobilize all possible sources of finance, public and private;
- include women in decision-making for climate adaptation policies;
- work with community-based organizations to implement climate adaptation programmes locally in order to produce better results at lower costs; and
- share information, expertise and resources with least developed nations and build the capacity of their institutions so they can receive money and spend it responsibly and efficiently.

In his concluding remarks, **Mr. McGuinty** reminded the participants that, as parliamentarians, they need to continue this important discussion. He added that their constituents are relying on them as the intermediary between important international targets, treaties and conventions, and their operationalization on the ground at home.

## **ADDITIONAL MEETINGS**

During the visit to New York, **Senator Saint-Germain** and **Mr. McGuinty** attended various meetings, including a reception hosted by Canada's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York and a working dinner meeting with Ambassador Bob Rae, Canada's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York. They discussed various matters relating to Canada's priorities at the UN, including Canada's involvement in the Summit of the Future, which was set to take place in New York on September 22–23, 2024.

They informed Ambassador Rae of various high-level IPU activities involving Canadian parliamentarians. These included the ongoing work of the IPU's Standing Committee on UN Affairs, of which Mr. McGuinty was then the President, and the involvement of the Speaker of the Senate, the **Honourable Raymonde Gagné**, and Mr. McGuinty in preparations for the Sixth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and the Fifteenth Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, which will be held in Geneva/Bern, Switzerland in late July 2025.

Ambassador Rae was also informed of the leading role of the **Honourable Michelle Rempel Garner, P.C., M.P.**, as a co-rapporteur of the draft resolution entitled "The impact of artificial intelligence on democracy, human rights and the rule of law," which was scheduled to be debated by the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights at the 149th IPU Assembly in Geneva in October 2024.

In addition, the Canadian delegation met IPU President Tulia Ackson and IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong on separate occasions during the visit to New York. Among other issues, they discussed IPU President Ackson's visit to St. Petersburg, Russia, in July 2024 and her meeting with President Vladimir Putin, which had generated criticism in parts of the IPU's membership. They also discussed Canadian financial support for the IPU.

The delegation met Ms. Catherine Adam, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister at Employment and Social Development Canada, with whom it exchanged views on the implementation of the SDGs in Canada and worldwide. Mr. McGuinty also discussed this same issue with Ms. Jennifer J. Sara, Global Director of the Climate Change Group at the World Bank, noting the lack of global progress in this regard.

The delegation attended a side event at the HLPF on July 16, 2024 hosted by the Government of Canada and titled “Canada Side Event – Addressing Poverty means Caring for Everyone: Why We Need to Pay Attention to the Care Economy.” They also attended a side-event co-hosted by the UN Institute for Training and Research’s (UNITAR’s) Global Water Academy and York University titled “Pathways to Resilience: Advancing Solutions for Global Freshwater Quality.” The side event explored the multilateral and environmental drivers exacerbating the deterioration of the quality of global freshwaters. At this event, they met Mr. Stephen Joyce, UNITAR’s Programme Coordinator of the Social Development Programme, and discussed future potential cooperation between the IPU Standing Committee on UN Affairs and UNITAR.

### **Travel Expenses**

Travel expenses associated with this activity can be found in the delegation’s financial report. This report is available in the Financial Disclosure section of the Parliamentary Diplomacy website.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Rob Oliphant, P.C., M.P.

President, Canadian Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union