Parliamentary Engagement in the Implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020

Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Islands Developing States
Summary

The Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) adopted at the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries constitutes the most ambitious undertaking of the international community to address the structural vulnerabilities of the LDCs and promote their development. The overarching goal of the IPoA is to enable half of the LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation by 2020.

The Istanbul Conference counted with the presence of Members of Parliaments from the Least Developed Countries, other developing countries and development partners, with a dedicated parliamentary track alongside the intergovernmental process. The pathbreaking presence of parliaments during the Conference was consistent with the principles that Member States established to achieve the goals enacted in the IPoA, which stresses that ownership, leadership and primary responsibility for their own development lies with LDCs themselves.

The IPoA includes a strong call to include parliaments in its implementation. Article 16 of the Political Declaration acknowledges the important role of parliaments in developing strategies as well as overseeing their implementation. The role of parliaments as key for implementation and stakeholder engagement or for strengthening good governance is highlighted in various articles. In fact, the role given to parliaments in the IPoA is unprecedented as it places a greater emphasis on their function in strengthening national ownership, accountability and transparency.

The present document seek to provide a useful guide to Members of Parliament, Government officials and UN country offices to illustrate some of the opportunities present in the IPoA for addressing the challenges of the LDCs and provide some recommendations to maximize the potential of parliaments as agents of development at the national level in their legislative capacity.
SECTION I: THE ISTANBUL PROGRAMME OF ACTION AND PARLIAMENTS

Overall Objective and Concrete Targets
The key aim of the IPoA is to enable at least half of LDCs to meet the criteria for graduation from LDC status by 2020. Five objectives were deemed instrumental to this end by contracting partners in Istanbul. The first three reflect the criteria of LDC status: achieve economic growth of at least 7% per annum, build human capacities, and reduce the vulnerability of LDCs to economic and environmental shocks. The final objectives – providing adequate financial resources and ensuring good governance at all levels – should be viewed as enabling factors, prerequisites for a successful implementation of the first three.

Figure 1 - The IPoA: main goals and enabling factors

Enable ½ LDCs to meet graduation criteria by 2020

The IPoA also rests on a number of principles that will be fundamental to its success. Among these is the fact that “the ownership of and leadership and primary responsibility for [LDCs] own development” lies with LDCs themselves. This principle in particular seems to imply a strong role for parliaments and other national actors in setting an implementation strategy for the IPoA. Other principles include a balanced role of state and market, an integrated approach for the development process, strong emphasis on equity at all levels and on the effective participation, voice and representation of LDCs within the international economic system. Finally, the IPoA rests on a genuine partnership, on the recognition that LDCs as the most vulnerable group of countries need enhanced global support, and on a result-oriented approach to judge its success.

In terms of priority areas, particular focus was given in the IPoA to the development of productive capacity in Least Developed Countries. This focus was particularly promoted by LDC governments as a means to obtain a structural transformation that would ensure sustained economic growth. The prominence of the section was a significant innovation in terms of the

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1 As defined by the Committee for Development Policy, which relies on three criteria to classify countries as LDCs: GNI per capita, the Human Assets Index and the Economic Vulnerability Index. More information is available at http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/cdp/ldc/lde_criteria.shtml
2 Art 29.a. IPoA
development aid priorities viewed as crucial by LDC negotiators, marking a shift from a more “traditional” concentration on ODA and trade.

Some of the specific terms by which productive capacity is to be increased in LDCs over this decade include the following:
- Invest significantly in **transport infrastructure**, by increasing rail and road mileage as well as developing air and sea networks
- Increase the **energy supply** per capita to reach the level of other developing countries
- Strive to achieve 100% **access to the internet** by 2020
- Support the **development of and transfer of technology** to LDCs through the establishment – following a joint gap and capacity analysis – of a Technology Bank and Science and Technology Innovation supporting mechanism dedicated to LDCs. This would “help improve LDCs’ scientific research and innovation base, promote networking among researches and research institutions, help LDCs’ access and utilize critical technologies and draw together bilateral initiatives, support by multilateral institutions and the private sector.”

From the outset, Turkey - host country of the LDC-IV Conference - announced that it would host an “International Science, Technology and Innovation Center” which would fit within the new mechanism and has since reiterated this claim.

Besides the strong focus on instruments to further LDCs’ productive capacity, the IPoA contains several targets in the seven other priority areas. These are: agriculture, food security and rural development; trade; commodities; human and social development; multiple crises and other emerging challenges; mobilizing financial resources for development; and good governance at all levels.

Among the concrete targets in these priority areas are the following:
- A call to double the share of **LDC exports** in global exports, and a commitment to realizing duty-free quota-free (DFQF) access for all LDCs
- A reiteration of the need to match promises made by development partners on reaching **ODA targets** by 2015, with a view to revisiting them after that year
- The recognition that LDCs will need financial and technical support in developing risk mitigation strategies to respond to economic shocks
- Finally, given the overarching target of enabling half of LDCs to be in a position to graduate by 2020, the importance of **support for a smooth transition after graduation from LDC status** was stressed in Istanbul. If a significant batch of LDCs should be ready to graduate in

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4 Paragraph 52.1, Istanbul Programme of Action
or around 2020, the international community will have to prepare to continue support for graduates as they lose some of the privileges afforded to LDCs.\(^6\) This is crucial, in light also of the experience of the Maldives which claimed that the international community didn’t always provide this support during its graduation process\(^7\). As only three relatively small countries have graduated from LDC status (whereas the current target would entail a graduating class of over twenty countries), the matter is particularly worth concentrating on. The IPoA invited the General Assembly to establish an ad hoc working group on smooth transition of graduating countries – which has since met and presented a final report on its findings – while also calling on all trading partners to extend trade preferences to graduated LDCs.

Some of the more specific targets are clearly ambitious; a report by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung\(^8\) notes that internet access was just 2.3% in LDCs in 2008 and energy supply would have to be multiplied by 13 in order to reach the target of matching other developing countries’ levels. These targets have nevertheless been object of an international agreement and as such can galvanize efforts by LDCs and development partners within the renewed partnership for development called for in the IPoA.

### The Istanbul Programme of Action and Parliaments

Meeting in Panama in April 2011 for its 124\(^{th}\) Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary Union endorsed a message for the LDC-IV conference. According to this message, a renewed commitment to good governance was crucial for the increased policy space that LDCs should be afforded to pursue their development priorities. The IPU assembly convened that “a crucial component of good governance reform involves strengthening the oversight, legislative and representative role of parliaments.”\(^9\) This call for a strengthened role of parliaments in setting development priorities was decisively reflected in the IPoA.

The LDC-IV Conference was innovative in promoting a “parliamentary track” alongside the intergovernmental negotiations track and the more established civil society and private sector dialogues. 160 MPs from 55 countries (including several Speakers of parliament) held

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\(^6\) These include preferential trade treatment, higher levels of grant aid and UN-specific support measures concerning travel funding and caps on contributions to the UN budget. See [http://esango.un.org/ldcportal/](http://esango.un.org/ldcportal/)


\(^9\) Conclusions of the 124\(^{th}\) IPU Assembly
discussions before governments negotiated the final draft of the IPoA. Among the main conclusions it is worth noting the following:

1. Parliamentary oversight of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPoA, the previous decennial roadmap for LDCs) was considered weak if not entirely absent.
2. MPs called for support in the capacity-building of LDC parliaments to research, monitor and report on IPoA progress as well as greater access to (and sharing of) all relevant information.

These three considerations will be crucial aspects to embed in any parliamentary strategy for the mainstreaming of the IPoA (see sections III and IV).

Among the greatest innovations of the IPoA compared to the BPoA was the strong call to include parliaments in the implementation of the agreement. This was visible already in Article 16 of the Political Declaration which acknowledges “the important role of parliaments in debating development strategies as well as in overseeing their implementation. The engagement of parliaments will ensure effectiveness, transparency and accountability in their design, the implementation and the review of the policies and programmes in the context of the IPoA”.

Parliaments are mentioned in several articles of the IPoA, in particular:

- Parliaments are seen as key for implementation and stakeholder engagement within the greater ownership and leadership of LDCs (paragraph 26.a)
- Stronger parliaments are also considered to be crucial to strengthen good governance in LDCs (paragraph 129.a), which as seen earlier is an enabling factor for the overall objective of the IPoA. In this context, LDCs are called upon to:
  - Improve parliamentary oversight of public financial management, thus enhancing transparency in decision-making on national development priorities
  - Promote effective participation of all stakeholders and government accountability by strengthening the role of parliaments (alongside civil society and other actors)
- The IPoA also calls on greater gender representation in parliaments and on the UN-OHRLLS to strengthen its ties with parliaments and other actors to provide support to group consultations on the implementation of the IPoA.

The extensive nature of language on parliaments is unique in the context of the past decade’s main UN Conferences on development. For example:

- The Brussels Programme of Action contained no reference to parliaments in the final text, even though a parallel high-level parliamentarians’ roundtable was convened and the Conference itself was held in the premises of the European Parliament.

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10 Summary report of the Parliamentary Forum at the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries: http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/ldciv/report.pdf
- The Millennium Declaration (2000) contains only one reference to the need to strengthen cooperation between the UN and parliaments;\textsuperscript{11} nearly identical language is to be found in the World Summit Outcome Document (2005). \textsuperscript{12}
- A somewhat stronger – albeit solitary – reference can be found in the Outcome Document of the Rio+20 Conference (2012).\textsuperscript{13}

The importance of the IPoA provisions on parliaments should therefore not be underplayed, for three reasons.

1. Firstly, as can be seen from the brief survey of key UN development conferences of the past decade above, the \textbf{emphasis on the role of parliaments is unprecedented}. Previous agreements have either ignored legislative bodies or left any reference to international-level cooperation between UN and IPU, while the national level was not directly mentioned.

2. Secondly, and consequently, parliaments in LDCs can rely on internationally agreed language to call for a \textbf{stronger say in the preparation, discussion and implementation of their country’s national development programmes (NDPs)} which are often largely in the remit of the executive branch and its development partners.

3. Finally and arguably most crucially, the greater onus on parliamentary involvement should entail a \textbf{more inclusive and transparent process} and a \textbf{more effective implementation of the IPoA}.

Given the strong call for action to parliaments to implement, oversee and guarantee accountability of IPoA strategies at national level, what can national legislative bodies actually do to mainstream the IPoA implementation? What has already been done? And in what way can the years ahead be used to boost the partnership for development of LDCs? These questions will guide the considerations of next sections of this guide.

\textsuperscript{11} “Strengthen further cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in various fields, including peace and security, economic and social development, international law and human rights and democracy and gender issues.”
\textsuperscript{12} “We call for strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the IPU, with a view to furthering all aspects of the Millennium Declaration in all fields of the work of the United Nations and ensuring the effective implementation of United Nations reform.”
\textsuperscript{13} “We recognize the importance of efforts by developing countries to strengthen leadership of their own development, national institutions, systems and capacity to ensure the best results of effective development by engaging with parliaments and citizens in shaping those policies.”
SECTION II: WHAT HAVE PARLIAMENTS DONE TO MAINSTREAM THE IPOA?

The IPoA’s particularly strong reference to the role of parliaments represents an important shift in the conception of the role of national actors in the implementation of intergovernmental agreements, but must be contextualized within an economically challenging scenario for many development partners and the ongoing, open-ended discussions on the post-2015 international development framework. This has taken some potency away from the implementation of the IPoA, and from parliaments’ role within it.

Main Results from Focus Groups

In order to investigate the steps concretely taken by parliaments and the challenges they face in the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the IPU and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) invited a number of LDC Parliaments to hold specialized focus groups on the role of Parliaments in mainstreaming the IPoA.

Parliamentary focus groups from Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Samoa and Sierra Leone were able to meet and provide feedback on the questions posed by the IPU/UNDP survey conducted by the UNDP field representatives.

The questions below were asked to the focus groups; the answers provided will inform the current and following two sections (see Annex I for full text of responses)

1. How familiar is parliament with the IPoA as an international development agreement?
2. What mechanism is in place to help parliament mainstream the IPoA through its own oversight and legislative processes?
3. Is parliament able to contribute to national development plans and how is this done?
4. How can parliament ensure that the IPoA is sufficiently reflected in the national development plan as well as in the budget?
5. How are other development agendas reconciled with the IPoA into one coherent policy approach?
6. How difficult would it be for the parliament to adopt and implement a multi-year Action Plan in support of the IPoA?
7. What support would the parliament need from development partners at both country and global levels to facilitate the implementation of the IPoA?

The key finding is undoubtedly that only a few Members of Parliament in the various focus groups were familiar with the Istanbul Programme of Action and even among these there was no awareness that the IPoA called on parliaments to take an important role in its implementation and oversight. While the responding focus groups represent only four out of a total of 49 Least Developed Countries’ parliaments, the homogeneity in their response is indicative of one of the main challenges ahead for implementation. The central issues of the
IPoA were obviously reflected in various national strategies and matter of legislation by parliament, but **the framework is fundamentally absent**. The lack of information was attributed variously to the multiplicity of international development agreement and the poor reporting back of parliamentary missions abroad.

The natural consequence of the above is that there are **no existing IPoA-specific parliamentary mechanisms** to propose legislation or monitor progress in any of the countries interviewed. Focus groups highlighted that existing instruments and initiatives, such as parliamentary subcommittees or UN-backed capacity-building projects aimed at parliaments, could be geared to support the role of parliaments in implementing the IPoA and overseeing of the government’s policies.

Responses were mostly homogeneous with regards to **parliamentary oversight** of one of the most important national processes setting long-term development priorities, the National Development Plan. None of the parliaments surveyed has direct oversight of their respective NDP, but all can exercise control indirectly either through the budgetary process or through committee hearings.

Focus group responses to the first three questions are summarized in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge of IPoA</th>
<th>BANGLADESH</th>
<th>BURKINA Faso</th>
<th>SAMOA</th>
<th>SIERRA LEONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliamentary mechanisms to support IPoA</th>
<th>BANGLADESH</th>
<th>BURKINA Faso</th>
<th>SAMOA</th>
<th>SIERRA LEONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None, but will need cross-party consensus for implementation</td>
<td>Information workshop held in September 2013</td>
<td>Samoa Parliamentary Support Project (IPU/UNDP); MDG Advocacy Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Subject-specific subcommittees and IPU committee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliament control over National Development Plans</th>
<th>BANGLADESH</th>
<th>BURKINA Faso</th>
<th>SAMOA</th>
<th>SIERRA LEONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control exercised indirectly through budget and MDG review processes</td>
<td>Control exercised indirectly via budget debates and Government hearings</td>
<td>Control exercised on specific policies and legislative reviews (and budgets viz. corporate plans)</td>
<td>Control exercised indirectly when Ministries present strategic plans to Parliamentary committees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**National Development Plans, Parliaments and the IPoA**

National development plans (NDPs) or strategies and long-term visions are the most appropriate instrument to embed internationally agreed development goals such as the ones outlined in the IPoA within national planning mechanisms.

An overview of currently operative NDPs in LDCs (see pages 10 and 11) is instructive to comprehend the **great complementarity between the IPoA and national development strategies**. The exercise also highlights which countries have already set forth a nationally-owned process towards graduation from LDC status, and to what extent Parliaments have been active to this end.

Of the forty-one NDPs analyzed, **thirteen set a target for graduation from LDC Status** or becoming a Middle Income Country within a certain timeframe – usually 2020 or later – as an overarching goal of the strategy. Three NDPs (Bhutan, Lao and Togo) specifically mention the Istanbul Programme of Action or the Brussels Programme of Action.

If nearly a third of NDPs surveyed contain the same aspiration as the IPoA it is even more striking, though it should not be surprising, that **the vast majority of the plans’ strategic goals are perfectly aligned with the ones outlined in Istanbul**. Good governance is explicitly mentioned in all but six of the forty-one NDPs analyzed as a strategic priority, while twenty-three mention developing human capacity. NDP GDP growth targets are also often numerically coherent with that set in the IPoA; of the fifteen countries opting for a quantifiable growth objective, nine have set it higher than the 7% per annum IPoA target.

The role of parliaments within national development planning that emerged from the overview analysis is particularly interesting. NDPs are often seen as falling within the clear remit of the executive branch. This is undoubtedly true in terms of the body tasked with the drafting of the plan; not one of the 41 NDPs analyzed was parliament-driven, with the majority led by ministries of Finance or Planning. Nevertheless, **nearly half of the NDPs analyzed assign on their respective parliament an explicit role**:

- Parliaments in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Chad, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Tuvalu and Zambia were consulted either in plenary form or through the inclusion of MPs/chairs of committees within the drafting body.
- Parliaments in Burundi, Ethiopia, Lao, Mozambique, Tanzania and Timor-Leste were presented their respective NDP for adoption.
- In seven cases (CAR, Congo DR, Guinea, Malawi, Niger, Senegal and Tuvalu) parliaments have a role in monitoring and follow-up, often through annual progress reports presented by the Government to Parliament or attached to the budgetary process.

This cursory overview of NDPs currently in force in LDCs offers a useful counterweight to the seemingly discouraging results from the parliamentary Focus Groups. Even if MPs are generally unaware of the IPoA, their countries’ overarching strategies are geared on similar overall strategic axes, **thus making mainstreaming the IPoA a simpler endeavor**. Furthermore, several LDCs already contemplate a clear role for Parliaments to influence the national strategies that will determine the success of the IPoA.
### National Development Plans/National Development Visions in LDCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Target Year</th>
<th>Graduation/MIC target</th>
<th>IPoA principles/objectives</th>
<th>Drafting body</th>
<th>Parliament role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afghanistan</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Consulted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>2021</td>
<td>MIC by 2021</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Planning Comm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X 7.5% p.a.</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhutan</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Graduation by 2020 IPoA mentioned</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X 10% p.a.</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Consulted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>2025</td>
<td></td>
<td>X “double digit”</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td>Voted for adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>“Emerging” country by 2025</td>
<td>X 8.9% p.a.</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td>Committee involved in developing &amp; monitoring progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>“Emerging” country by 2025</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comoros</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Presidency</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo DR</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X 7.2% p.a.</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td>Monitor progress annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djibouti</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td>X 11% p.a.</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Voted for adoption after five day debate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Become a MIC (no year chosen as target)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Monitor progress annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinea-Bissau</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X 5% p.a.</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>“Emerging” country by 2030</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiribati</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Graduation by 2020 IPoA mentioned</td>
<td>8% p.a.</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td>NDP presented to Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>2017/8</td>
<td></td>
<td>X 5% p.a.</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\text{Information was not accessible for all countries}\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
<th>Ministry or Body In Charge</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>MIC by 2030</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>9% p.a.</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Committee involved in developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Voted for adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>2015/6</td>
<td>Graduation from LDC status by next decade</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>6% p.a.</td>
<td>Planning Commission</td>
<td>Unclear/Unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Monitor progress annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>“On the brink” of middle income status by 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.5% p.a.</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Parliament voted for adoption of 7YP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samoa</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>“On the ramp to emergence”, no target yr</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Monitor progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Middle income by 2035</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>4.8% p.a.</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Consulted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>2015/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>8% p.a.</td>
<td>Planning Commission</td>
<td>Consulted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timor-Leste</td>
<td>2030</td>
<td>Upper MIC by 2030</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Voted for adoption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Emerging country in 15-20 years. IPoA mentioned</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>6% p.a.</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuvalu</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Consulted and monitor progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>2015/6</td>
<td>MIC by 2040</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Other Gov.t</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X X</td>
<td>Min. of Planning</td>
<td>Unclear/unspecified</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Min. of Finance</td>
<td>Consulted and monitor progress annually</td>
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SECTION III: WHAT CAN PARLIAMENTS DO TO MAINSTREAM THE IPOA

While LDC parliaments have not yet embarked on full-scale implementation of the IPoA’s provisions, the greatest part of the IPoA’s decade of implementation lies ahead and a concerted effort at the national and international levels to coincide with the mid-term review can yet yield important progress.

In the IPoA parliaments are called upon to increase leadership and ownership of the development strategy of LDCs, while also enhancing transparency and accountability in their countries. They can act on at least three levels:

- As a **development actor** legislating on the targets set out by the IPoA, particularly in terms of the key objectives required to achieve economic growth at least equal to 7% p.a., build human capacity, and reduce vulnerability to external shocks.
- As an **enabling factor** for good governance at all levels, ensuring an accountable decision-making process both by providing oversight of executive decisions and by enhancing the transparency and representativeness of the legislative process.
- As a **political space** where a debate representative of all national stakeholders’ positions can be held in order to ensure real national leadership in fixing overarching (and long-term, therefore necessarily cross-party) targets such as the decision to graduate from LDC status by 2020.

**Parliaments as a development actor**
Parliaments as legislative bodies are agents of development at the national level, capable of translating into nationally relevant laws the goals and indicators agreed upon in the IPoA and monitoring the activities of government in this regard.
This can be done at an *operational* level, by selecting among the 126 specific actions that LDCs are called upon to implement in the IPoA\(^\text{15}\) which ones are nationally relevant and require legislative action on the part of parliament. Parliaments can intervene by amending draft legislation proposed by the government or through the introduction of legislation directly on the part of MPs. Several of the actions listed in the IPoA – such as promoting the agro-processing industry, ameliorating access to credit, expanding internet infrastructure to rural and remote areas, and increasing renewable energy generation (to mention but a few) – are actions that parliaments can select from and pursue through single draft laws. While these may need to be translated into nationally relevant goals with appropriate indicators, they are a blueprint for development action. This was an aspect highlighted by the Sierra Leone Parliamentary Focus Group according to which the IPoA covers aspects where legislation is sometimes absent but parliamentary action is hindered by a lack of the appropriate information to develop indicators in support of this legislation.\(^\text{16}\)

It is important to note that operational actions must be pursued by parliaments of development partners as well as those in LDCs. There are in fact 109 actions aimed specifically at development partners and among these particularly crucial ones tied to the enabling factor of adequate financial resources. Bilateral aid of only ten out of twenty-three OECD/DAC countries meets or exceeds the 0.15-0.20% of GNI target urged for first in the Brussels Programme of Action and the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, then reiterated in the IPoA. The DAC total was just 0.10% of the member countries’ combined GNIs (see chart below)\(^\text{17}\).

\[2\text{- Net ODA, above and below the 0.15 threshold (2011, \% GNI)}\]

\[\text{Graph showing Net ODA above and below the } 0.15 \text{ threshold (2011, \% GNI).}\]


\(^{16}\) See focus group responses, Annex I

\(^{17}\) OECD DAC, see http://iif.un.org/sites/iif.un.org/files/file_attach/ODA%20%25ofGNI_0_0.xls
Development partner parliaments therefore have a crucial role to play, in particular in terms of ensuring **financing** for the IPoA is appropriate and timely. In this regard development partner parliaments should seek to invite MPs and civil servants from LDCs to open sessions, public hearings and other fact-finding initiatives on financing and ODA for the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

Parliaments can also act at a *strategic* level, by ensuring **coherence across the legislative spectrum and with IPoA**, as well as by interacting with the government and development partners on key development documents such as the National Development Programme and the budgetary review process. This is recognized by the executive branch of LDCs too: the Laotian National Development Programme includes a target to strengthen parliament’s capacity for coordination and integration of legislative action with international agreements.

In terms of coordination within parliament to ensure overall coherence with the IPoA, this will require a strategic decision to act within existing mechanisms or through the creation of new ones. It must be noted in this regard that a recent survey conducted by the IPU among its member parliaments found that only a small number of these had dedicated sub-committees for UN Affairs, which were instead usually in the remit of the Plenary or the Committee on Foreign Relations/International Affairs. This should induce some caution as to the likelihood of ad-hoc formal subcommittees being created specifically to monitor the IPoA in LDC parliaments.

Focus group responses to the issue of which mechanism would best serve coordination purposes were mixed; while MPs from Sierra Leone indicated that existing parliamentary committees could be tasked with covering relevant aspects of the IPoA implementation with a government focal point tasked with collating the targets related to the IPoA, Bangladesh’s focus groups suggested that an MDG Monitoring subcommittee could be created to follow the IPoA as well. Both options were put forth by the Burkina Faso MPs, who suggested that the regular meeting of the chairpersons of the parliamentary groups could be the occasion to coordinate on IPoA implementation, but that a special committee could also be established.

Less formal coordination mechanisms can include support groups such as working groups, caucuses or task forces of “Friends of the IPoA” and would have the advantage of being more flexible and open ended. Such a parliamentary network could also coordinate informally with groups in other LDCs, according to the MPs from Burkina Faso. For a full overview of the advantages and disadvantages of different structures of parliamentary mechanisms in support of the IPoA prepared by the IPU see Annex II.

Besides ensuring coherence across legislation and between national legislation and the IPoA, parliaments have a clear role in mainstreaming the IPoA through their **oversight of and interaction with governments on key programming documents such as the budget and National Development Programmes**.

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Several LDC parliaments have a consultative role in the formulation of their National Development Programmes, and many of these call on the legislative bodies to have a role in their implementation or monitoring.\(^1\) Moreover, the majority of the LDC’s most recent National Development Programmes concentrate on the same overall objectives as the IPoA, in particular on the need to develop human capacities and physical infrastructure, as well as ensuring good governance and placing numerical targets for GDP growth. There is therefore great complementarity between the work parliaments are doing already on oversight of NDPs and that required for the monitoring of the IPoA.

In this sense Parliaments have an important role to play in ensuring coherence between the NDPs and the IPoA. In those thirteen LDCs where graduation or reaching MIC status has been explicitly set as a national target, this becomes even more fundamental. A clear compatibility between the nationally owned development strategy and the international agreed development goals strengthens the case for LDCs seeking the support of development partners and the respect of international commitments.

As seen in Section III there are three ways in which parliaments can interact with NDPs, and each of these can be an instrument to mainstream the implementation of the IPoA:

1. Parliaments are consulted before NDPs are drafted and can therefore request the inclusion of references to the IPoA as a guiding document
2. Parliaments sometimes have the power to vote on the NDPs presented by their Government and could thus threaten to block the adoption of an NDP that is manifestly incoherent with the IPoA
3. Parliaments’ power to monitor progress on the implementation of NDPs can and ought to be a chance to question government on the execution of parallel and synergetic IPoA strategies

Those parliaments that do not have a formal role within the planning process could consider advocating for greater oversight powers in light of those held by legislative organs in other LDCs.

In light of developments promoting greater interaction between the UN and Parliaments at the national level (as opposed to only UN/IPU interaction at the international level)\(^2\), Parliaments in LDCs should also seek to develop strategies to mainstream IPoA implementation in partnership with the executive branch and UN agencies. More specific proposals on how this collaboration can be enacted and strengthened will be put forward in Section IV.

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19 See map of NDPs in section III

20 In particular General Assembly resolution 66/261 calls on “closer cooperation between the United Nations and parliaments at the national level, including in terms of strengthening parliamentary capacities, reinforcing the rule of law and helping to align national legislation with international commitments” and “calls upon United Nations country teams to develop a more structured and integrated manner of working with national parliaments, inter alia, by involving parliaments in consultations on national development strategies and on development aid effectiveness.”
**Parliaments as an enabling factor**

As a fundamental component of the IPoA’s enabling factor of good governance, parliaments must pursue internally those same objectives of transparency and accountability that they seek to fulfil when serving as watchdogs for governments.

Among the goals explicitly expressed in the IPoA (and present in several NDPs) is that of **greater representation of women in parliaments**, an objective attainable by means both voluntary (ex. gender-balanced party lists) or binding (gender quota legislation). The situation in LDC Parliaments currently is mixed.\(^21\) A Least Developed Country currently tops the IPU’s World Classification of female representation in the lower houses of parliament; with 63.8% of seats held by women, Rwanda’s parliament has by far the largest share of female parliamentarians in the world. Other LDCs also feature among the leading countries, with female MPs representing 42.7% of the total in Senegal, 39.2% in Mozambique, 38.5% in Timor-Leste and 36% in Tanzania. The LDC average is significantly lower, at 18.7%, though not greatly different from the global average of 19.7%.

Sixteen LDCs have used their latest NDP to set a target for female representation in parliaments, usually at around one-third of all MPs, though some such as Angola, Burundi and Mozambique aim higher (40%, 40-50% and 50% respectively). How these targets are to be met can vary from country to country, particularly as the three leading LDCs in this ambit use different instruments, varying in degrees of formality. While gender quotas are fixed in Rwanda’s constitution, Senegal has changed its election code to require equal representation among candidates to all elections, and Mozambique has left it to political parties to implement voluntary gender quotas.\(^22\) These three countries have taken very different paths to the same objective and can therefore serve as examples for different national contexts in LDCs striving to meet the IPoA objective of greater gender representation in Parliament.

**Parliaments as a crucial political space**

Besides implementing legislation and monitoring government progress, parliaments must also serve as a locus for **multi-stakeholder engagement** on the overall development vision of the country. While a strategy to implement the IPoA may never be unanimously accepted at a detailed level, the overall vision must rest on a cross-party and truly cross-interest platform. The 2013 annual workshop of LDC national focal points held in Geneva concluded that “strong political commitment and transformative leadership are essential to integrate the Istanbul

\(^{21}\) [http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm](http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm)

Programme into national development frameworks and ensure successful implementation of this programme of action through coordinated multi-stakeholder participation."\textsuperscript{23}

To this end parliaments can hold hearings with CSOs and academia, open committee meetings dedicated to the IPoA or to graduation from LDCs to the public and more generally use its convening powers to host discussions that will bring greater ownership of the entire nation over its development path and build a political consensus of the utility of this aim. This is once again particularly crucial if – as several LDCs have done – an explicit graduation target is set, given that a horizon of a decade or more implies a greater likelihood of an alternation of the parties composing the majority.

SECTION IV: THE ROAD TO 2020 – FULFILLING THE PROMISE OF ISTANBUL

The Istanbul Programme of Action’s focus on the world’s most vulnerable countries makes it a particularly urgent undertaking. The lessons from previous frameworks led to a strategy clearly reflective of the need to let national actors adapt and build upon the priorities defined at the international level to make them locally appropriate. As a natural consequence, parliaments were assigned a key role in the implementation of the IPoA. However, this has yet to be accomplished. A clear strategy to unlock the unfulfilled potential of strong parliamentary mobilization in the implementation of the IPoA will be necessary. As noted earlier in the guide, parliaments in LDCs have a role to play as a crucial component of the good governance enabling factor, as an active development actor promoting key IPoA priorities and as a crucial political space to forge a cross-cutting consensus on a development strategy aimed at graduation from LDC status.

In light of this triple role, what can the UN System do the build-up to the mid-term review to support parliaments mainstream the IPoA? Below are some options offered for discussion.

1. **Raise awareness and promote information-sharing**
   The UN system has a crucial role to play in raise awareness and inform parliaments of the key role they are called upon to play in the implementation of the IPoA. It should also provide detailed but clear information to support parliamentary action to this end. It is clear from Focus Groups that while MPs have not received sufficient information on the IPoA they do not think that implementation efforts are not in the legislative’s remits and would therefore welcome greater support.
   One solution to this lack of information could be further developing the UN-OHRLLS website to include a portal serving as a key access point for MPs seeking key documentation and support on the Istanbul Programme of Action. The portal, embedded within the existing website should be both a classic repository of information - much of which is already existing but dispersed across different agencies’ websites or not presented in a user-friendly approach - but also a more participatory exchange site for MPs and other stakeholders seeking to implement the IPoA.
   The UN-OHRLLS website currently summarizes the IPoA’s key points in a straightforward manner, particularly useful for those unfamiliar not only with the LDC-IV Conference but with the legalistic language of UN resolutions in general. The Office of the High Representative also makes available a statistical compendium on IPoA implementation in LDCs and metadata with suggested indicators to monitor progress and the rationale behind their choice. The latter in particular was brought up during the work of the Sierra Leone parliamentary focus group as something that was necessary. All this information could be readily used in the portal oriented to support MPs in LDCs in their understanding of the IPoA and adaptation to the national context.

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The portal should also seek to be a point of access for the plethora information available on UN websites, particularly LDC information by the UN-DESA’s Committee for Development Policy,\(^27\) the support measures for LDCs detailed in the Support Measures Portal for Least Developed Countries,\(^28\) the statistics and information contained in UNCTAD’s annual LDC Report, and the statistics, information and recommendations contained in the OHRLLS State of the LDCs Report.\(^29\)

Besides offering a single access point for the wealth of already existing information and statistical background that can be useful for legislative actors and other stakeholders in LDCs a dedicated portal should try to “translate” the IPoA further than done already by the OHRLLS into information that can more directly used from MPs. For example, the portal should present the actions agreed upon in the IPoA clustered by the priority actions used in the Istanbul text. These clusters should include not only the specific actions listed in the IPoA but also the appropriate subgroup of suggested indicators that can be used to set targets and monitor progress, and useful background documents and reference sites. Given that different LDCs will be discussing different priority areas at different times, and within them different MPs will be promoting different legislation depending on their own expertise and background, the thematic organization of the information available would do much to support any legislative action.

The portal can also serve as an online exchange for documents, information and draft or enacted legislation between parliaments thus offering a forum for an informal cross-national parliamentary support mechanism for the implementation of the IPoA. To this end access to the portal should be provided to eventual IPoA focal points within LDC parliaments that wish to exchange information with the UN system and other parliamentarians, perhaps with the support of the IPU. Any legislation or commitment taken specifically to further the overall targets of the IPoA could be showcased on this portal and its lessons learnt shared.

The portal doesn’t need to be hosted by the UN-OHRLLS, nor must it be specifically constructed as suggested above. Nevertheless it is clear from the parliamentary focus groups that there is a clear need for more accessible and targeted information to reach parliamentarians if they are to fulfill the crucial role the IPoA sets out for them.

2. Include parliamentary perspectives in key occasions of dialogue with the UNCT

The UN system and programme country governments already coordinate on a regular basis to develop clear development strategies tying the international with the national level. This cooperation is usually conducted by the Resident Coordinator and results in the common country assessment (CCA) and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). At the moment the national level is represented by government officials, but such meetings – at least when discussing the IPoA – could be opened to one or more MPs, preferably a member or leader of a parliamentary committee with authority over development planning. A recent experience of a


broader interaction of the UN country team with national stakeholders has been within the context of Delivering-as-One (DaO) during the deployment of the “One Programme” and it could serve as an example. The inclusion of MPs would have the double positive effect of informing parliament (which can then implement monitor and evaluate accordingly) and of bringing the instances of those represented in parliament to the table in the first place. In those countries where MPs are clearly tied to a local district this can also offer a chance to ground in the local level programs that are conceived at the international level.  

3. Parliamentary capacity-building schemes
A message that transpired particularly strongly from the parliamentary focus groups was the need to strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians and their staff. All focus groups stressed that parliaments could only successfully mainstream the implementation of the IPoA if the UN and development partners provided the technical assistance required to interpret and implement international development agendas as well as to coordinate relevant action plans. Besides technical assistance and training for parliamentary staffers, other needs listed included better ICT equipment as well as support for parliamentary research resources. The abundance of development frameworks and global strategies was noted as complicating efforts by parliaments to ensure coherence of national legislation with international agreements; workshops devised to support parliamentary “deciphering” of the IPoA into a nationally appropriate strategy should therefore concentrate on building skills that can be helpful when interfacing with other UN development frameworks as well as the IPoA.

In order not to replicate work that is already done, development partners and the UN-OHRLLS could seek to support and collaborate with UNDP’s parliamentary assistance projects in LDCs and with the IPU’s Committee for UN Affairs when possible to explore potential avenues for strengthening parliaments’ capacity to interpret and implement the IPoA. These exercises should seek to support permanent parliamentary staff as well as MPs; the Samoa Focus Group noted that turnover rate in the Samoan parliament is approximately 50%, and undoubtedly this is not an exception among LDCs.

4. Use the global IPoA mid-term review as a galvanizing moment for parliamentary action
With twenty-four of the surveyed LDCs’ National Development Programmes ‘expiring’ in the period 2015-2017, parliaments’ interaction with their national development strategies can inform and be informed by the IPoA mid-term review process, thus providing an institutionalized and concerted opportunity to mainstream the IPoA through parliaments’ work.

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30 From interview with Esnart Mpokosa, Deputy Director at the Ministry of Finance of Zambia and UN-OHRLLS Zambia focal point “I would support the idea of having a representative of Parliament who is also a councilor at district level to be part of the consultative process as he/she is likely to provide useful information when setting out UNDAFs and other country programme strategic documents.”
All efforts should be made to include a parliamentary forum during the official mid-term review, and to ensure strong linkages between its work and that of the intergovernmental forum, in the expectation that synergies created between representatives of the legislative and executive branches during the conference can have a multiplier effect at the national level. Besides offering parliaments’ views on progress towards the IPoA’s goals, the forum should focus on concrete actions that these bodies can commit to in order to further mainstream the IPoA. A more effective result would be obtained if the forum was not a one-off occasion but an integral part of a more articulated “parliamentary track”, with preparatory work conducted at the national or regional levels in the next years. Such work could be conducted in the context of the capacity-building schemes mentioned in point (3).

Producing strategies that are more appropriate to the national level thanks to the inclusion of parliaments should result in a more effective final outcome for the Istanbul Programme of Action. Moreover, a heightened role for parliaments within the IPoA process can also serve as a model also for the work to be conducted in light of the post-2015 agenda. There is increasing consensus for a more flexible framework than the one embodied by the MDG agenda, to make any new goals more easily adaptable to very differing national realities. This greater flexibility will undoubtedly give space to national stakeholders – such as parliaments, civil society and the private sector – to have an important role not only in implementing the framework but in conceptualizing it.
FOCUS GROUP I – BURKINA FASO

1. **How familiar is Parliament with the IPoA as an international development agreement?**
The Parliament is hardly familiar at all with the Istanbul Programme of Action, which is rarely mentioned during parliamentary debates. The issue was directly addressed last year in Kampala during the IPU Assembly. Of the group that was interviewed, only one member said he had heard of the Programme of Action. This is therefore a challenge. The current Parliament has served for less than a year, as its membership was renewed following the last legislative elections in December 2012. Parliamentary missions abroad are very poorly documented and the reporting back is not done systematically, which explains the lack of knowledge about the Programme of Action among parliamentarians. The resumption of parliamentary activities in September will provide the opportunity to hold an information workshop on the Programme of Action.

2. **What mechanism is in place to help Parliament mainstream the IPoA through its own oversight and legislative processes?**
There is no mechanism to help Parliament integrate the Istanbul Programme of Action into its legislative and monitoring work. A mid-term review of the Programme of Action is planned for 2015, which coincides with the end of the country’s Strategy for Growth and Sustainable Development (SCADD). It will be an opportunity for Parliament to be involved in evaluating the Programme of Action, through determining the actions taken and results obtained in the areas identified therein.

3. **Is Parliament able to contribute to national development plans and how is this done?**
The Constitution of 1991 contains provisions allowing Parliament to debate public processes, in particular through budget debates, which most often extend beyond the financial framework. The Prime Minister’s speeches on the state of the nation also provide an opportunity for Parliament to contribute to defining the broad lines of policy and development plans. In addition, the Government often presents to Parliament draft public policies so as to gather opinions and contributions.

4. **How can Parliament ensure that the IPoA is sufficiently reflected in the national development plan as well as in the budget?**
The Parliament can ensure that the Istanbul Programme of Action is reflected in the country’s development plan, in particular through mechanisms for overseeing Government action, requesting information from the Government, budget discussions, and allocating public resources. To do so, parliamentarians have proposed the following approach:
- Organize an information workshop for parliamentarians on the Istanbul Programme of Action, for which UNDP will be called upon. The workshop could be followed by an appeal by the management of UNDP to the Bureau of the National Assembly;
- Create a parliamentary network or special commission on the Istanbul Programme of Action, which could be extended to other parliaments in African LDCs;
- Formulate an action plan to support the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. The action plan will be proposed to the Bureau of the National Assembly and, if it is adopted, will be integrated into Parliament’s workplan and implemented through the standing committees.

The parliamentary network on the Istanbul Programme of Action could be a specialized body within the already functioning parliamentary network on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). UNDP recently ran a workshop for parliamentarians on the issues and challenges of the MDGs.

5. **How are other development agendas reconciled with the IPoA into one coherent policy approach?**

Within Parliament there is a mechanism to ensure consistency between its activities, through a meeting of the chairpersons of the parliamentary groups and committees. In addition to this mechanism, it could be useful to establish a special committee responsible for coordinating initiatives and ensuring consistency between the development programmes.

6. **How difficult would it be for the Parliament to adopt and implement a multi-year Action Plan in support of the IPoA?**

There would be no difficulty in adopting a multi-year action plan; when a plan is adopted it is automatically incorporated into the accountability framework and the usual functions of the parliamentary committees.

7. **What support would the Parliament need from development partners at both country and global levels to facilitate the implementation of the IPoA?**

- Technical assistance for national ownership of the Istanbul Programme of Action is essential; it could come from the UNDP Office or at the global level;
- Expertise to help Parliament in formulating action plans for the implementation of the Programme of Action;
  - The development of such a plan would help to better identify assistance needs, particularly regarding finance;
- Financial resources for implementing the Parliament’s action plan on the Programme of Action;
- The parliamentarians who were interviewed recommended that financial resources should be mobilized at the international level by the IPU and/or the body responsible for the Istanbul Programme of Action and assisting parliaments in LDCs in implementing their action plans.
Focus Group II: Samoa

1. How familiar is parliament with the IPoA as an international development agreement?
There is limited knowledge by the parliament of the IPoA. However, the Strategy for the Development of Samoa, 2012-2016, noted compatibility with key focal areas identified under the IPoA as well as others i.e MDG, BPoA, Agenda 21 etc.

2. What mechanisms are in place to help parliament mainstream the IPoA through its own oversight and legislative process?
The Parliament of Samoa with financial assistance from AusAID through UNDP is implementing the Samoa Parliamentary Support Project (SPSP). The project intends to build the capacity of MPs on parliamentary procedures and committee functions; building the capacity of the secretariat to ensure the required service provided to MPs is of quality standard; engaging the public and the community in the legislative process and parliamentary committee makeup.
The parliament of Samoa has a Corporate Plan 2013-2016 which outlines key outcomes and related activities by the secretariat to service the parliament, Outreach Strategy for public and community engagement activities; Draft Law and Research Strategy that shall organize the required service and the information and data requirements to facilitate good and sound debates; ICT strategy identifies short and long term requirements in enhancing and utilization of ICT in the work of parliament; Draft Samoa Parliamentary Service Bill.
Twining partnership arrangement with the Australian Parliament (Tasmania) has greatly nurtured and promoted the role of parliament and parliamentarians as legislators. Exchange visits have provided practical experience observing debates and question time in the respective parliaments; and the general oversight and legislative process.
The Pacific Partnership Program under AusAID which involves other Pacific Parliaments provided the opportunity to learn of the parliamentary situation in these neighbouring countries. The Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference (POCC) that is in its 44th year, provide a forum for Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island parliaments to share from each other experience in particular where they can improve their service. The last conference was held in Canberra, July 2013 and Samoa will host the 2014 Session.
Parliamentary advocacy groups have been formalized in the health sector, in the Population and Development area and the MDG Advocacy Group is soon to be activated having previously been constituted. There are also efforts under the broader MDG scope for resource mobilization where UNDP is providing technical guidance and assistance.
Therefore the Samoa Parliament has mechanisms in place to provide oversight of national development plans and to a certain extent the MDGs but not specific to the IPoA.

3. Is parliament able to contribute to national development plans and how is this done?
Parliament response has been on policies and legislative reviews; and related debates. In addition, are the review of budgets against agreed corporate plans; annual reports and accounts of respective ministries, SoE that are supported by Government.

4. How can parliament ensure that the IPoA is sufficiently reflected in the national development plans as well as in the budget?
The IPoA has clear focal areas and governance is one which the parliament can be a main actor in addition to an oversight role in to other focal areas. To ensure these focal areas are addressed
and streamlined in the respective plans and budgets, parliament shall be involved in the approval process. This process can be channelled through the work of the respective committee and during the public outreach activities. The Parliament Legal & Research strategy is intended to provide and facilitate access by Members of Parliament to updated data and information and law on any area of development.

Regarding the governance focal area, parliament will have particular focus Community Development through Improved Economic and Social Wellbeing and Improved Village Governance. Particular focus on the Village Governance Strategy prepared by the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development (MWCSD); there is the Law and Justice Sector Plan amongst others.

5. **How are other developments agendas reconciled with the IPoA in to one coherent policy approach?**

The SDS 2012-2016, examines Samoa development issues across all sectors. These issues are presented in a very compatible manner in how they are approached with other regional action plans i.e. MDG, IPoA, National Adaptation to Climate Change to name a few.

The Parliament corporate plan provides MPs and external stakeholders with a snapshot of the officers vision, mission, guiding principles and values which are perquisites of good governance as expected of all public sector agencies as outlines in the SDS 2008-2012.

6. **How difficult would it be for the parliament to adopt and implement a multi-year Action Plan in support of the IPoA?**

Building the capacity of Members will be continual exercise as the turnover rate is about 50%. However, constraints which make this important planning approach will be the availability of resources to support capacity building activities.

Another difficulty is the sheer number of national, regional and global development plans and strategies that often relate to good governance. The Parliament does not have the capacity or mechanisms in place to provide effective oversight of all of these different plans and strategies even if multi-year action plan was adopted.

7. **What support would the parliament need from development partners at both country and global levels to facilitate the implementation of the IPoA?**

- Training for MPs and Secretariat Staff on leadership; parliamentary procedures and research
- Equipment
- Information Communication technology
- Effective Community Access and Awareness
- Quality infrastructure and working facilities
- Resources to facilitate the creation of mechanisms in parliament to implement and provide oversight of the implementation, as well as resources to fund the staff needed to facilitate such mechanism. Resources and support for partnership arrangement with other parliament in the other member countries of IPU and CPA.
- Active involvement with IPU activities
Focus Group III: Sierra Leone

1. **How familiar is Parliament with the IPoA as an international development agreement?**
   A few of the senior Members of the House knew about the Istanbul Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries 2011-2020. However, even they were unaware that Parliaments were considered a major stakeholder in the roll out of the IPOA.

2. **What mechanism is in place to help Parliament mainstream the IPoA through its own oversight and legislative processes?**
   The Members were very clear that the targets of each of the priority areas as stated in the IPOA could be handled by Parliament through its numerous subject specific committees. At one point a suggestion was made that a group could be constituted like the one on population or the women caucus, to engage specifically on tracking the priority areas as stated in the IPOA. However, after debating over the point, Members unanimously agreed that an IPU Committee, as was formed in the previous Parliament, could take up the task of prioritization of IPOA in the work of the Parliament in Sierra Leone.

3. **Is Parliament able to contribute to national development plans and how is this done?**
   The general refrain was that Parliament does not contribute directly to the national development plans as the role of a parliamentarian as a member of the legislative arm of the state is distinct from that of the executive. However, many Members were quick to point out that MPs do get an opportunity to impact the policies of the MDAs by making suggestions and inputs when Ministries submit their strategic plans to the respective committees. The example of the policy on Petroleum was cited wherein suggestions from the Parliament discussion were incorporated in the government policy. At the same time, senior Members also mentioned that many a time, the recommendations of the Committees were not heeded. Also, proper monitoring of implementation and status reports of the Ministries and Departments were thought to be other ways of influencing government policy.

4. **How can Parliament ensure that the IPoA is sufficiently reflected in the national development plan as well as in the budget?**
   It was thought that a monitoring framework needs to be designed with clear indicators to capture the progress in each of the priority areas and Parliamentarians through the subject specific committees could oversee its progress, suggest improvements in implementation, etc. Also, MPs could raise awareness about the targets of IPOA by taking it to the people. This point was linked to the support provided to the previous Parliament of Sierra Leone by IPU for outreach activities. Legislation was stated as an option as it was felt that many aspects of the priority areas as mentioned in the IPOA were not been captured in the legislations related to those areas in Sierra Leone.
   Role of the Media was raised as another way by setting the agenda, discussing it at length and generating a public opinion on a priority area of the IPOA and then moving towards policy formulation. While these ideas were spoken about, it was also pointed out that often policies and legislations are rushed not leaving much scope for lengthy consultations and deliberations.

5. **How are other development agendas reconciled with the IPoA into one coherent policy approach?**
This was identified as a task which may be taken up by the respective parliamentary committees on areas which fall within their mandate as covered in each of the development agendas such as the MDGs, Agenda for Prosperity, IPOA, etc. to improve its oversight roles. It was felt that the concerned Ministry or Department of the government should have a duty to collate the targets as specified in the different development agendas and report regularly on them. Also, it was thought an IPU Committee consisting of Members of Parliament could oversee and coordinate committees which are dealing with the priority areas of IPOA.

6. **How difficult would it be for the Parliament to adopt and implement a multi-year Action Plan in support of the IPOA?**

   It was considered difficult but not impossible. It was thought to be a difficult task as there was not much information available to Parliamentary Committees to develop indicators or any framework much less a multi-year Action Plan.

7. **What support would the Parliament need from development partners at both country and global levels to facilitate the implementation of the IPOA?**

   - Technical assistance to reconcile the different development agendas and the IPOA into one coherent policy at the country level, further to develop a multi-year Action Plan for the Parliament
   - Support to Parliament Research to provide the necessary inputs for Committees and MPs on IPOA
   - Training for the Parliament Staff on IPOA, indicators and targets and designing monitoring frameworks for each of the priority areas.
   - Capacitating MPs to engage in overseeing the progress on the priority areas as stated in the IPOA
   - Capacitating the Members of the IPU Committee in Parliament to design a monitoring framework and integrate it in a seamless manner into the work of the respective subject specific committees
   - Support for Communications; both on IPOA itself at the country level and to Parliament for the Members/Committees to raise awareness on these internationally agreed targets to their constituents.
Focus Group IV: Bangladesh

A Focus Group Discussion was held in the IPD Offices in the afternoon of October 3, 2013. Twelve Members of Parliament attended. There were x5 Women MPs (including a Member from the main Opposition Party BNP) and x5 Parliamentary Standing Committee Chairmen. A variety of Committee sectors including Education, Law, Environment, Public Accounts, Government Assurances and Public Undertakings were represented. The following constitute the agreed recommendations that the Members of Parliament would like reflected in the IPU Assembly discussions on October 7, 2013. At the end of the document is a summary of other issues that emerged which are noteworthy as challenges that the Bangladesh Parliament observed impede their ability to be able to make meaningful contributions in the IPoA and broader development debate.

MP recommendations/key themes:
A. None of the Parliamentarians had any prior knowledge about the IPoA nor their role in overseeing its implementation,
B. Cross Political Party consensus is critical if the IPoA is to be successfully implemented. The change of Government following an election should not dilute/reduce that consensus.
C. Parliamentarians will need a special MDG Monitoring Group established to assess and provide their inputs into the work associated with the post 2015 discussions.
D. Parliament requires annual reports from the Government about the progress on the MDGs and IPoA implementation.
E. All external development assistance must be on budget
F. The Parliament needs to internalize and be thoroughly briefed about the international global development targets that Bangladesh is committed to achieve and have a better understanding about Bangladesh-specific SDGs & the IPoA.
G. Parliamentarians did not believe that the international community fully appreciates the challenges facing MPs in LDCs. LDC Parliaments were under resourced both in terms of intellectual capacity and physical infrastructure. Things like the absence of access to good quality Parliamentary research staffers impeded their ability to discharge their key scrutiny functions.

Other themes that emerged which although broader than the IPoA FGD nevertheless have a direct read across to the ability of the Parliament to oversee the implementation of overarching development initiatives:
- Currently there is little room nor allowance made for the need for the Parliamentarians to be fully briefed about key international development initiatives nor for them to offer contributions during policy formulation,
- The LDC target to halve the number of LDCs is overly ambitious and unlikely to be achieved,
- The convoluted bureaucracy and the power wielded by many public servants in the Government made it very difficult for the MPs to understand and navigate the Machinery of Government when they sought information.
- Parliament has little or no understanding about the national budget/consider the quality of the gender budgets,
- There is very limited space to influence real change in terms of assessing development priorities in the context of the IPoA etc.
- Parliament’s Rules of Procedure require amendment to allow greater space for the Parliament to assess the implementation of development projects.
- Greater peoples participation in public policy implementation would also be important to support the demand side of governance,
- Parliamentarians would like to see their Parliament become a model for the Region but that relied upon a comprehensive programme of capacity building support to be designed for the incoming 10th Parliament,
- The MPs asked IPD to identify the Government focal point dealing with the MDGs and the IPoA to enable further briefing about the IPoA to take place.
### ANNEX II: PARLIAMENTARY FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

*Developed as a Guidance Note for IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs - UNC/2011/4-R.1 - Item 4 - 10 October 2011*

The table below provides a summary of the possible structure and membership rules of an informal or formal mechanism, as well as the pros and cons of each option.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(IPoA) Support groups (working groups, caucuses, task forces, informal groups or forums)</th>
<th>Dedicated (IPoA) committee or subcommittee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Membership</strong></td>
<td>Committees are often composed of a set number of men and women members from the different parties in parliament. Generally, the composition of parliamentary committees is representative of the parliament’s political configuration.</td>
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<td>Usually, membership of parliamentary support groups is open-ended and women and men members from different parties/political factions can join. There are however cases in which a support group can be limited to a set number of members.</td>
<td>Parliamentary procedures on subcommittees and committees vary from parliament to parliament. Most often, standing orders are required to constitute a formal committee, along with the authorization of the Speaker.</td>
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<td><strong>Structure</strong></td>
<td>The degree of formality varies. A support group can be very informal, with only basic, if any, rules of procedure. However, it is advisable that the members elect a Chair (two co-chairs are also possible) and a Secretary, as a minimum, to ensure continuity between meetings, coordinate agendas, circulate information to all members, etc.</td>
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<td><strong>Advantages</strong></td>
<td>Gathering of MPs from all political parties as a matter of rule may provide balanced political representation as well as traction.</td>
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<td>A flexible structure that MPs can shape according to their needs and objectives (addressing issues and carrying out activities that would be more difficult to do within the framework of the parliament’s work).</td>
<td>In bicameral parliaments, a joint committee can comprise members from both Chambers.</td>
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<td>The open-ended nature of membership means that potentially a large group of MPs can be involved and a broader spectrum of skills and experiences brought together than in a committee restricted to a smaller number of MPs.</td>
<td>Extensive powers to summon witnesses and conduct inquiries (this may not be granted to subcommittees).</td>
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<td>Less prone to internal conflict because informal groups tend to attract more like-minded and committed people from the various parties, which is important for coalition-building.</td>
<td>Official access to the parliament’s resources.</td>
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<td>More direct contact with grassroots networks (e.g. farmers’ and women’s groups) to discuss policy options or assess development results.</td>
<td>Continuity of the work between elections (vacant seats would have to be filled).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proceedings and decisions are fed into the parliament’s official decision-making process, and the committee is automatically supplied with information and other inputs from the rest of parliament (according to the established reporting lines or other procedures).</td>
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<td><strong>Provide a politically safe space for MPs to critique and suggest practical ideas.</strong></td>
<td><strong>A potentially cumbersome process to create the committee, often requiring the approval of a higher authority, such as the Speaker or the majority leader, which may be difficult to negotiate.</strong></td>
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<td>- In bicameral parliaments, the group can comprise members from both Chambers.</td>
<td>- Closed membership may compromise individual skills and competences vis-à-vis the need to achieve political balance (between parties) and assign seats to MPs who could not be accommodated in other committees.</td>
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<td>- The group can decide on specific functions that it will seek to perform in each session of parliament, for example by raising questions and using parliamentary instruments to initiate debates.</td>
<td>- In some countries, participation and configuration of committees can change after an election.</td>
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<td>- Easy establishment and dissolution of issue-specific working groups based on MPs own interests.</td>
<td>- The creation of an “IPoA ghetto”, or possible overlap with the work of portfolio committees.</td>
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<td>- Participation by MPs who may have been excluded (due to rules and regulations) from membership in formal structures.</td>
<td>- Less flexibility to address issues that are not included in ordinary parliamentary work.</td>
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<td><strong>Disadvantages</strong></td>
<td>- The need to abide by the rules of procedure of parliament and the objectives set out in the resolution establishing the committee.</td>
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<td>- Informal character of the group may restrict access to the parliament’s resources.</td>
<td>- The need to build consensus or at least a common understanding between majority and opposition members, in order to reduce the risk of stalemate.</td>
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<td>- Possible lack of continuity (depending on the structure chosen) in the work.</td>
<td><strong>Possible lack of discipline among members, including poor attendance or poor preparation before meetings.</strong></td>
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