

UNITAR Launches Capacity Building Programme for Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development

Key issues include Climate Change and Energy, Trade and Water

[UNITAR](#) is launching a global capacity building programme for parliamentarians in the field of sustainable development, in cooperation with [the Inter-parliamentary Union \(IPU\)](#).

An Inaugural Conference of the **Global Capacity Building Initiative for Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development** was held 22-23 April 2005 in the Luxembourg Palace, seat of the French Senate in Paris.

Experts and legislators from over 70 countries in every region of the world discussed the role that parliaments and parliamentarians can play in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and in advancing the agenda for sustainable development.



"Parliamentarians must respond to the challenges of sustainable development with a common vision and collective action to build a safer, more fair and more sustainable future. Our initiative will, we hope, give parliamentarians the tools to build this better future".
Opening remark by **Mr Marcel Boisard**, Executive Director of UNITAR.

Keynote opening speakers at the conference were **Mr Nitin Desai**, former Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations who spoke on The Global Sustainability Agenda in the New Millennium and **Mr Tariq Banuri**, Stockholm Environment Institute, also addressing implementation of the WSSD plan of action and the MDGs.

Mr Tom Spencer, former MEP, Executive Director of ECPA and Senior Advisor to the Institute for Environmental Security, was the chair and a presenter of the session on **Parliamentary perspectives and insight in advancing the Sustainability Agenda**.

This session provided an opportunity for parliamentarians representing Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America to offer their perspectives and insights on how best to advance the sustainability agenda, and on the special role elected representatives have to play. Specific questions included:

- *How can the capacity of elected representatives be strengthened to advance the interests of the public in discussions of sustainable development at the national and international level?*
- *How can existing international agreements and development targets – including the Millennium Development Goals and outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development – be better implemented into national law?*
- *What can be done to assist elected representatives to ensure that new international instruments negotiated by the executive are representative of and responsive to national priorities as identified by legislators?*



Mr Janos Pasztor, Director of Sustainable Development Programme of the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (left) and **Mr Tom Spencer**, Senior Advisor of the Institute for Environmental Security, at the Inaugural Conference in Paris.

- *What would encourage more effective engagement by elected representatives in the work of the United Nations and other international organizations, with the goal of promoting more efficient, effective and accountable governance at the global level?*

Focus on key Sustainable Development Issues

The conference included working groups focused on Climate Change and Energy, Trade and Water which explored the main challenges facing parliamentarians – both substantive and political – in promoting sustainable development, their role in addressing these challenges, and opportunities to strengthen capacity and support of parliamentarians.

The discussions were led by **Mr Janos Pasztor**, Director of Sustainable Development Programme of the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, **Ms Louise Curran**, European Commission, DG Trade, Trade Analysis Unit and **Mr Peter Bridgewater**, Secretary of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands.



Key Role for Parliamentarians

Parliamentarians are being called upon increasingly to deal with major international questions, including environmental management and sustainable development.

To be more effective, they must be aware of the major challenges in this field. In the words of the IPU Secretary General, "the stronger the role of parliaments, the more they play a crucial and effective role in the management of the affairs of society, both nationally and internationally".

The IPU Secretary General pointed out that "parliaments contribute to ensuring better governance", as they are the main representative institution of the State, and it is thus their duty "to represent the interests of all sectors of society, to take into account such interests in the policies they adopt and to ensure that these policies are effectively implemented".

The UNITAR Executive Director said that "parliamentarians have a key role to play in setting up a more democratic, effective and responsible system of global governance. Parliamentarians must respond to the challenges of sustainable development with a common vision and collective action to build a safer, more fair and more sustainable future, and must prepare for their constituents the better legacy that they deserve. Our initiative will, we hope, give parliamentarians the tools needed to build this better future".

For more information on the Inaugural Conference of the Global Capacity Building Initiative for Parliamentarians on Sustainable Development: <http://dcp.unitar.org/spip/rubrique20.html>