



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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Association of
Secretaries General
of Parliaments



Greener Parliaments: The role of parliamentary administrations?

Summary report

Introduction

On Thursday, 5 October 2023, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) hosted a joint webinar entitled *Greener Parliaments: The role of parliamentary administrations?*. The event, which primarily targeted Secretaries General of parliaments and other senior office holders in charge of parliamentary services, aimed to promote and advance the institutionalization and implementation of environmentally sustainable practices in parliaments worldwide.

The webinar was held twice on the same day in order to accommodate participants in all time zones. The two sessions were attended by a total of 60 participants from countries around the world. They featured introductory presentations from Mr. Najib El Khadi (President, ASGP) and from Aleksandra Blagojevic (Programme Manager, International Development, IPU) and Kareen Jabre (Director, Division of Programmes, IPU). These were followed by presentations from Secretaries General of parliaments and representatives of parliamentary administrations in Cambodia, Canada, Estonia, Moldova, Poland Thailand and the United Arab Emirates, A summary of the speakers' presentations can be found in the annex to this report.

Background: The IPU's Parliaments for the Planet campaign

The [IPU's Parliaments for the Planet campaign](#), launched in March 2023, embodies a collective commitment to reducing carbon footprints and fostering environmentally sustainable practices within parliamentary settings worldwide. The campaign also aims to facilitate parliamentary action by influencing legislation, budgets and the scrutiny of government measures aimed at achieving the Paris Agreement targets.

Central to the campaign are the [10 actions for greener parliaments](#), which serve as a road map to guide parliaments towards a future where parliamentary operations reflect the principles of environmental responsibility. Spanning everything from resource efficiency to biodiversity preservation, these actions encapsulate a holistic approach and reflect a joint endeavour for parliaments around the world.

Parliaments for the Planet and the role of Secretaries General of parliaments and parliamentary administrations

The IPU publication [10 actions for greener parliaments](#) contains a non-exhaustive list of specific actions that Secretaries General of parliaments can take in order to contribute to the campaign, with the support of parliamentary staff:

- Lead the technical and administrative process for the development of a parliamentary sustainability strategy, including targets for the energy and water efficiency of the parliament building(s)/ premises and a green procurement policy
- Establish an internal task force or working group to track the greening of parliament
- Ensure a system for tracking emissions from parliament's operations is set up
- Hold briefings on parliament's sustainability plans and practices
- Provide regular awareness-raising training to parliamentarians and fellow parliamentary staff on global and national climate trends and issues
- Support digital and hybrid ways of working across parliament to reduce emissions from commuting and cut down on paper waste

Examples of concrete actions

Below are examples of some of the concrete actions participants said they were taking in order to institutionalize environmentally sustainable practices and green their parliaments.

Building renovation:

- Undertaking renovations in order to improve the environmental performance of parliamentary buildings, including a variety of features such as advanced insulation, energy-efficient lighting and solar power

Energy efficiency:

- Increasing energy efficiency in order to reduce overall energy consumption
- Implementing measures for reducing energy use and resource consumption
- Undertaking water conservation initiatives
- Investing in renewable energy sources

Waste management and reduction:

- Implementing waste management practices and reducing the use of single-use plastics

Green transport:

- Replacing conventional vehicles with electric ones and installing vehicle charging stations

Awareness-raising and education:

- Running awareness-raising campaigns and educational programmes on sustainable practices and environmentally friendly initiatives
- Organizing contests, assessments and awards in order to encourage sustainability
- Crafting slogans to inspire and reinforce a green mindset among staff

Digitalization, sustainable IT practices and hybrid working

- Embracing digitalization
- Developing and implementing strategies for sustainable IT practices
- Developing comprehensive user manuals and training staff
- Transitioning to a paperless parliament
- Supporting increasingly hybrid ways of working

Strategies and standards:

- Formulating comprehensive sustainability strategies
- Establishing and adhering to green office standards

Green spaces and biodiversity protection:

- Creating green spaces within and around parliamentary buildings
- Actively participating in the protection of local biodiversity

Leadership engagement and advocacy:

- Engaging political leaders and ensuring top-level support for sustainability initiatives

Collaboration and partnerships:

- Forging collaborations within and across parliamentary institutions and partnering with external stakeholders in order to increase support for sustainability initiatives and enhance their impact



Green-space and tree-planting initiatives outside the Parliament of Cambodia



Prize-giving ceremony for the Green Office Awards at the National Assembly of Thailand



Heritage buildings present particular challenges that require a balance between preservation and sustainability. The Parliament of Estonia

Key messages and recommendations

The key messages and recommendations below are based on the content of the presentations, as well as on the insightful discussions and analysis that followed. They aim to guide Secretaries General of parliaments and parliamentary administrations in fostering environmentally responsible practices, embracing sustainability and contributing meaningfully to global environmental goals.

Sustainability planning and commitment

- **Develop a comprehensive sustainability strategy**
A comprehensive sustainability strategy – outlining key objectives and actions – is fundamental in guiding long-term efforts towards more eco-friendly parliamentary operations.
- **Adopt green office policies**
Adopting green office policies is a strategic decision with the potential to deliver positive outcomes such as cost savings, improved public perceptions and long-term sustainability. Consider developing, adopting and consistently applying green office policies across all units and departments.
- **Make sustainability an institutional priority**
Embed a lasting commitment to environmental sustainability into the fabric of parliament as an institution through collaborative initiatives and working groups. Making a “green parliament” a core priority of institutional strategies enhances the overall effectiveness and efficiency of parliamentary operations and demonstrates a commitment to sustainability that not only aligns with global environmental goals but also contributes to responsible and forward-thinking governance.
- **Set up a dedicated sustainability commission**
Consider establishing a dedicated sustainability commission, involving MPs and administrative entities, to spearhead transformative initiatives that are aligned with international guidelines for greener and more eco-friendly parliamentary practices.
- **Strike a balance between immediate and long-term commitments**
It is essential to strike a balance between addressing immediate needs with limited resources and making long-term sustainability commitments. Recognize the substantial impact of small actions in fostering environmental stewardship. Consider prioritizing initiatives that deliver short-term efficiency gains while contributing to long-term sustainability. Develop a comprehensive budgetary plan that strategically allocates funds, including to larger-scale, longer-term projects, thereby ensuring a thoughtful and balanced approach to resource management.
- **Adopt a holistic approach**
A holistic approach that integrates sustainability, transparency and inclusivity initiatives can help to foster trust and ensure accountable and responsible governance.

Leadership and employee engagement

- **Engage parliamentary leadership**
Top-level support is crucial to the success of green initiatives. Secretaries General of parliaments and other senior office holders in charge of parliamentary services should actively involve political leaders in advocating for sustainable policies and practices, ensuring ongoing commitment to environmental initiatives, and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility at the highest levels.

- **Engage parliamentary staff**

Initiatives such as annual sustainability contests can motivate staff and increase awareness of environmental issues and their impact, as well as providing a structured platform for departments to assess sustainability performance.

Education and awareness-raising

- **Take a proactive approach to education and awareness-raising**

Hold seminars and workshops in order to proactively raise awareness among MPs and parliamentary staff about energy consumption, sustainability and climate change, thereby helping to foster a culture of environmental responsibility.

- **Harmonize technical measures and awareness-raising initiatives**

Combine impactful technical measures with robust awareness-raising initiatives for parliamentary staff. This dual approach ensures tangible outcomes and cultivates a lasting environmental consciousness among staff.

- **Support digitalization with training and capacity-building**

Digitalization is crucial, but it must be combined with robust training programmes for both MPs and parliamentary staff. Investing in comprehensive training ensures that everyone is fully equipped to reap the benefits offered by digital technology.

Collaboration and partnerships

- **Forge external partnerships**

Seek to collaborate with external partners and leverage their expertise and resources. This is especially important for smaller parliaments looking to successfully implement ambitious sustainability initiatives despite resource constraints and other limitations.

- **Collaborate internally**

Foster collaborative initiatives and partnerships across departments or institutions to unite in shared environmental stewardship goals. Address challenges collectively, recognizing resource limitations and budget constraints. Advocate for shared responsibility, emphasizing that greening processes require efforts at both the institutional and individual levels.

Green initiatives and infrastructure

- **Strike a balance between preservation and sustainability**

Encourage thoughtful consideration of both historical significance and environmental impact in all renovation and modernization projects. Develop a framework for integrating preservation efforts with sustainability initiatives in historic and heritage-protected buildings.

- **Expand environmental efforts beyond parliament itself**

Strengthen institutional practices by focusing on protecting and promoting diverse ecosystems, species and habitats within and immediately surrounding the parliamentary premises. This type of comprehensive approach ensures a more responsible and impactful contribution to sustainability.

Annex: Summary of speakers' presentations

Mr. Najib El Khadi (President, ASGP)

Mr. El Khadi expressed his gratitude at participating in a joint webinar on climate change organized by the IPU and the ASGP. He highlighted the Parliaments for the Planet campaign and the global threat of climate change, and acknowledged the positive steps taken by parliaments, such as reducing energy consumption and sorting waste. He emphasized the role of parliaments in supporting sustainability measures and called for global cooperation to address climate challenges. Mr. El Khadi mentioned ongoing initiatives, such as guides on digital transformation, and proposed collaborating with the IPU to create a document summarizing global ecological best practices. He concluded his address with a commitment to continued collaboration and expressed his thanks to the participants.

Ms. Aleksandra Blagojevic (Programme Manager, International Development, IPU) and Ms. Kareen Jabre (Director, Division of Programmes, IPU)

The speakers gave an overview of the IPU's work on climate action, highlighting ongoing efforts to raise awareness and mobilize political will around climate action through advocacy, capacity-building, tools and resource development, as well as to support parliamentary engagement in the Conferences of the Parties. They presented the Parliaments for the Planet campaign, which was launched in March 2023 and embodies a collective commitment to fostering environmentally sustainable practices globally. Central to this initiative are the *10 actions for greener parliaments*, which serve as a comprehensive road map to guide parliamentary operations towards environmental responsibility.

The speakers highlighted specific recommendations for Secretaries General of parliaments and parliamentary administrations, covering strategic leadership for sustainability, internal oversight and tracking, communication and engagement, and technological integration for sustainability. Secretaries General of parliaments were encouraged to lead the development of parliamentary sustainability strategies, to set targets for energy and water efficiency, to establish internal mechanisms for tracking green initiatives, and to promote technological solutions to reduce emissions.

The speakers concluded by emphasizing the pivotal role of Secretaries General of parliaments and parliamentary administrations in shaping parliaments that not only govern but also inspire a sustainable legacy. The stage was opened for participants to share their experiences and insights. Audience members were encouraged to stay involved in the campaign, and to share their initiatives with the IPU for amplification and showcasing.

Estonian Parliament

The Estonian Parliament has been at the forefront of integrating environmentally friendly initiatives. Its sustainability efforts align with growing climate awareness, are shaped by budgetary considerations and are guided by the European Green Office initiative. The speaker highlighted the importance of cost-effective measures such as turning off devices and sorting waste, which require awareness-raising. Larger projects, such as renovations, demand substantial funds and are executed when budgetary resources permit. It is crucial to strike a balance between immediate actions with minimal resources and long-term, financially sustainable improvements.

Despite aesthetic challenges, notable progress in energy efficiency has been achieved when dealing with historic and heritage-protected buildings, as evidenced by a 15% reduction in annual electricity

consumption since 2012. The Parliament recognizes the delicate balance between preservation and sustainability, which necessitates thoughtful consideration of both historical significance and environmental impact.

Ongoing initiatives focus on optimizing electricity usage, including upgrading windows as required. A comprehensive overhaul of heating and ventilation systems is planned by the end of the decade. The Chancellor's Office actively addresses immediate concerns, such as reducing water use, improving waste management and promoting sustainable practices among staff. Future considerations include purchasing electric cars, with plans for charging infrastructure.

The digitalization efforts of the Chancellor's Office serve as a model, with a fully digital environment having been in place for over a decade. Emphasizing minimal paper usage and sustainable IT choices, the Office prioritizes energy efficiency in IT operations through server virtualization. While acknowledging challenges, the Office advocates for holistic digitalization planning in order to minimize unintended complexities. Overall, the Chancellor's Office remains committed to a sustainable, environmentally friendly approach, balancing historical preservation with modern efficiency.

National Assembly of Thailand

In 2019, the National Assembly of Thailand relocated to one of the world's largest parliamentary buildings, spanning 424,000 square metres and accommodating over 3,000 parliamentary staff. This move brought the environmental challenges associated with such vast working spaces and a large workforce, including high energy and resource consumption. The former President of the National Assembly, Mr. Chuan Leepkai, acknowledged these challenges and actively endorsed a policy aimed at improving parliamentary practices, reducing environmental impacts and fostering awareness of sustainability issues.

The Secretariat of the House of Representatives played a pivotal role in translating the green office policy into action via the adoption and implementation of the Green Office Standard, a set of guidelines developed by the Department of Climate Change and Environment under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. This standard drives measures to reduce energy and resource consumption. Additionally, the Secretariat promotes sustainable consumption practices among staff, emphasizing the "reduce, reuse and recycle" concept, and employs digital technologies to advance eco-friendly practices within the parliamentary setting.

Two key points emerge from the experience of the National Assembly in implementing the Green Office initiative. The first is the significant role played by the President of the National Assembly in championing the policy. This top-level support has been crucial in driving the intensive adoption of green practices by the parliamentary administrations of both the House of Representatives and the Senate. The second is the successful introduction of green office contests, which encourage departments to participate in activities that raise awareness about environmental issues and motivate staff to contribute positively to environmental protection. These contests, which culminate in the presentation of awards by the President of the National Assembly, also offer a platform for departments to assess their performance against the Green Office Standard. This commitment to sustainability has persisted from the former President to the current one, demonstrating an enduring dedication to green office principles in the National Assembly of Thailand.

Senate of Cambodia

The Senate of Cambodia recognizes the pivotal role of parliamentary administrations in the greening process, given their responsibility for managing resources, facilities, services and staff. Its commitment to sustainability is embodied in the long-term Strategic Development Plan (2021–2030), which prioritizes a “green parliament” for enhanced institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

The Senate’s commitment to sustainability is evident in several key initiatives, including the adoption of energy-efficient measures such as solar panels and electronic sweepers, as well as efforts to limit non-essential travel and to promote eco-friendly transport practices.

The Senate emphasizes waste management by recycling plant waste and by embracing digital technologies to reduce paper use. It has been a pioneer in promoting green spaces by introducing a diverse range of tree species, solidifying its standing as one of the largest green expanses in Phnom Penh. This commitment extends to fostering a cultural shift towards sustainability, with MPs and staff actively engaged through slogans such as “Do more with less” and “3Es: Effectiveness, Efficiency and Economy”. Looking ahead, the Senate is planning to introduce a comprehensive waste management system, to bring in a non-plastic usage policy and to enact a transformative shift towards becoming an e-parliament. While resource limitations and other challenges persist, the Senate recognizes that greening parliaments requires concerted efforts at both the institutional and individual levels.

Parliament of Montenegro

The Parliament of Montenegro has made great strides in its efforts to establish a more eco-friendly and sustainable work environment. The Parliament recently completed a major renovation of its central building, creating a more sustainable and efficient workspace. The renovation work focused on minimizing the building’s carbon footprint and optimizing energy efficiency, and included features such as advanced insulation, energy-efficient lighting and a rooftop solar power plant, which is projected to meet over 45% of the Parliament’s annual electricity needs. The Parliament’s commitment extends to broader sustainability practices, including eco-friendly materials and responsible waste management, as well as efforts to make parliamentary transport practices more sustainable by replacing conventional vehicles with electric ones and installing vehicle charging stations.

It is important to note that, as a small parliament, the Parliament of Montenegro faces limitations, particularly in terms of resource availability. This underscores the significance of external partnerships and support, which have played a pivotal role in enabling the Parliament to realize its ambitious sustainability plans.

The Parliament of Montenegro is actively engaged in a digitalization process, aligning with modern trends and inspired by successful models, particularly that adopted by the European Parliament. Its focus is on improving legislative efficiency, transparency and accessibility while at the same time achieving cost savings. Steps have included introducing functional components and comprehensive user manuals, as well as training staff. The Parliament also has plans to train MPs and to promote the wider uptake of digital tools. Its ultimate goal is to shift to entirely paperless processes, with faster data flows, enhanced access to information, automated document tracking and real-time statistical data monitoring.

Alongside its sustainability efforts, the Parliament of Montenegro has made notable progress in the areas of transparency and inclusivity. Initiatives include broadcasting plenary and committee sessions on a public channel, providing sign-language interpretation for crucial sessions, and redesigning the

website for visibility-impaired accessibility. The Parliament's commitment extends to open data practices, which ensure transparent governance, citizen inclusion and overall efficiency.

Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates

The Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates has been actively engaged in legislative and parliamentary diplomacy over the past five decades. It has overseen the development of 20 draft laws, with a particular focus on the environment and sustainability. Efforts have been directed towards areas including preserving biological diversity, promoting the use of renewable energy and addressing environmental pollution.

In 2022, the Federal National Council established a dedicated commission, highlighting its commitment to transforming parliament into a more sustainable institution. This pioneering commission, which comprises MPs and members of the General Secretariat, follows the guidelines of the IPU's *10 actions for a greener parliament*.

Since May 2023, the commission has successfully executed 16 projects and is currently working on more than 15 initiatives. The Federal National Council has embraced various measures, including the use of cloud servers and a carbon emissions monitoring platform, in order to track and reduce its environmental impact. Sustainable transport practices have been adopted, with 47% of parliamentary vehicles now being electric. Since 1999, various digitalization initiatives, including the launch of mobile applications and a paperless parliament model, have contributed to a 60% reduction in printing.

The Federal National Council has been proactive in raising awareness about energy consumption, including by holding seminars and workshops on sustainability and climate change. Its comprehensive sustainability strategy for 2024–2028 focuses on three key areas: sustainability, digitalization and innovation.

The Federal National Council emphasizes the importance of sustainability as an institutional objective for all parliaments, as a way to contribute to a more sustainable future with credible economic and political policies at both the national and international levels.

Parliament of Poland

The Parliament of Poland, and particularly the Chancellery, has implemented a series of impactful environmental initiatives. These include organizing collections of used batteries, developing multi-year plans for the modernization of its buildings and adopting a comprehensive pro-environmental policy. Climate-conscious measures involve waste segregation, investments in solar energy and low-emission vehicles, and an extensive campaign to educate staff about environmental threats.

Efforts extend to energy-efficient practices such as conducting energy audits, introducing building management systems and modernizing lighting. One noteworthy project aims to generate electricity from renewable sources, starting with a pilot solar power plant. The Parliament aligns with the country's electromobility development policy, with plans for 50% of the vehicle fleet to be electric by 2025.

Sustainability practices also cover eco-certified hardware, Forest Stewardship Council-certified paper and biodegradable packaging. The Chancellery's information system enhances efficiency, offering faster access to information and reducing environmental impact. The Parliament has also installed an apiary with 20 beehives, emphasizing the importance of protecting bees in urban areas and raising awareness of global extinction issues.

Parliament of Canada

The Parliament of Canada, and especially the House of Commons, has taken a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability. The Partners for a Green Hill programme, established some two decades ago, unites various parliamentary institutions in committing to environmental stewardship. It centres around the traditional “four Rs” (reduce, reuse, recycle and rethink), with a focus on preserving the environment in and around the parliamentary premises.

Recent developments include the formation of the Sustainable Precinct Working Group, which aims to foster collaboration among key partners. Small-scale initiatives involve comprehensive recycling and waste management, food donations to charities from parliamentary cafeterias, and efforts to minimize plastic use. There is a significant emphasis on optimizing the vehicle fleet by transitioning to hybrid and electric models, and on promoting the use of public transport.

Hybrid proceedings are now a permanent feature of parliamentary operations following the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift has enhanced parliamentary efficiency and substantially reduced transport-related greenhouse gas emissions. Through its move towards digitalization, the Parliament aims to reduce its reliance on paper resources, aligning with broader environmental goals.

The Parliament of Canada is currently engaged in a comprehensive building renovation programme, focused primarily on the historic core. With 32 buildings across the parliamentary premises, this programme aims to restore ageing structures, accommodate a growing parliament, and modernize buildings for accessibility, sustainability and security. The Sustainable Precinct Working Group ensures a holistic approach by collaborating with multiple partners.

Key achievements include a construction waste diversion rate of more than 80%, various water management initiatives, and certifications such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold and Green Globes Level 4.

The ongoing building renovation programme targets net-zero carbon, with specific objectives for each project, such as the renovation of the main parliament building. Once the worst-performing in the federal portfolio, this historic building is being transformed into a carbon-neutral space, targeting LEED Platinum and other certifications. Initiatives encompass district heating, geothermal energy, thermal enhancement for energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, rainwater management, and a focus on low-carbon and healthy materials. Heritage preservation and the reuse of materials minimize environmental impact, while smart building technologies and sensor integration further contribute to sustainability.