

Interface between Post Legislative Scrutiny and Sustainable Development Goals and the state of play in South East Asia and the Pacific

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

1. Introduction

Adopted in 2015, the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda is a global framework for sustainable development, setting 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 sub-objectives related to the most significant economic, social, environmental and governance issues that mankind is facing. In the past years, progress has been made in many areas of the 2030 Agenda. For instance, the participation rate in early childhood and primary education worldwide has increased to 70 per cent in 2016, from 63 per cent in 2010, while by 2018, 108 countries had national policies and initiatives relevant to sustainable consumption and production.¹ While the mandate for implementing the above goals and objectives is vested into the Executive of each UN member state, the parliaments are entrusted with the equally important role of debating and passing the related legislative measures as well as supervising their implementation.

2. Parliaments and SDGs

Earlier studies already attempted to systematize parliamentary conduct in relation to SDGs as well as to collect information on parliamentary involvement.² The present contribution shall shed additional light on the engagement of Parliaments to control implementation of SDGs. For this, institutional and non-institutional measures from several parliaments of the world were evaluated with the aim to map parliamentary involvement and to develop a general framework. The current proposal is an announcement of the related two-year global study on the parliamentary monitoring of UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Based on the underlying complete data set, which has been already made public to the academic community,³ special light shall be cast on South East Asia and the Pacific.

This is the first time such a comprehensive review of parliamentary involvement in relation to the monitoring of the implementation of SDGs has been conducted. The analysis of the information about parliaments of UN member states has led to the determination of a set of basic types of dedicated parliamentary bodies that handle SDGs related issues. Moreover, the nature of cooperation with extra-parliamentary stakeholders, such as the Government, Non-Governmental Organizations and international organizations is closely analyzed. Furthermore, significant barriers in correctly capturing parliamentary information on a global scale have been noted and discussed. The study also attempts to study the extent of involvement in relation to budgetary issues for SDG implementation.

¹ For more details, see the Sustainable Development Goals Report by the United Nations (2018), pp. 6-10.

² See, e.g., Deveaux and Rodrigues (2018).

³ See Fitsilis and Zisioglou (2019); the two-dimensional matrix contains data on countries, intra- and extra-parliamentary conduct, control of the SDG budget and general comments; overall, it contains 154 entries, which correspond to 153 UN member states (+Palestine).

3. Post Legislative Scrutiny

‘The act of evaluating laws that a parliament has passed is known as Post Legislative Scrutiny’ (PLS).⁴ In the parliamentary domain, PLS falls under the function of parliamentary control. Nevertheless, to date, most parliaments lack sufficient capacity to systematically follow up on the implementation of passed legislation. Instead, the traditional system of –written or oral– questions is used by parliamentary groups and Members of Parliament to exercise parliamentary control. As parliaments continue to build up their capacities in order to adapt to new challenges,⁵ PLS can be a domain where parliaments may increase their leverage against the executive.

In general, PLS constitutes a recent development in parliamentary procedures and practices aiming at strengthening the parliamentary oversight on the implementation of legislation. PLS can be considered a broad concept along two main lines: the legal dimension assessing the enactment of the law and the impact dimension assessing to what extent the policy objectives of the law have been met. In this context, we shall examine the possibility to apply PLS principles,⁶ to follow-up on the implementation of SDGs and assess whether PLS is a viable long-term solution to guarantee their achievement.

Finally, based on existing good practices, the present contribution shall conclude with a series of recommendations and urge parliaments to take on action to support the success of SDGs, as an additional means to strengthen their own position in the institutional system.

4. Basic references

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⁴ According to De Vrieze and Victoria Hasson (2017), p. 7.

⁵ See, e.g., Fitsilis et al. (2017).

⁶ See De Vrieze (2018).