Indicator 1.11 – Specific state policies

Parliamentary effectiveness can be assessed by the way in which functions are aligned to make an impact across key state policies. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 SDGs provide a framework for assessing how parliament supports efforts to end poverty, build peaceful societies, promote prosperity and well-being, and protect the environment for current and future generations. SDG 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This is both an outcome and an enabler of sustainable development. As the central institution of representative democracy, parliaments worldwide must examine their internal practices to ensure that they are responsive and inclusive and oversee action taken by government on the SDGs and across state policy areas, while guaranteeing transparency and accountability for public decision-making.

The 2030 Agenda represents a rights-based approach to development and this indicator assesses how parliament can play a central role within a national human rights framework.

It is also essential for security sector and defence policy issues to be subject to parliamentary scrutiny and control, reflecting that human rights, peace and security are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. In assessing foreign affairs and parliament’s role in diplomacy and international cooperation, this indicator examines how parliaments play a key role in democratizing decisions made above the level of the nation state.

The assessment of the indicator on specific state policies comprises the following dimensions:

- 1.11.1 SDGs and the 2030 Agenda
- 1.11.2 Human rights
- 1.11.3 Security sector
- 1.11.4 Defence policy
- 1.11.5 Foreign affairs
- 1.11.6 Parliamentary diplomacy and inter-parliamentary cooperation
Dimension 1.11.1 SDGs and the 2030 Agenda

Indicator: 1.11 Specific state policies
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension outlines the central role of parliament in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs represent a globally-agreed plan of action for people, the planet and prosperity. An effective parliament is one that integrates this wide-ranging and transformative agenda across its core functions, including the debate and scrutiny of national plans for sustainable development, the incorporation of the SDGs into the legal framework, and the bridging of the gap between the international and national levels through the localization of the goals.

Parliament is key to helping to formulate and oversee the implementation of national SDG plans and policies. Sustainable human development requires specific strategies to combat discrimination, reduce inequality and uphold the rights of marginalized groups, ensuring that no one is left behind. Parliament’s duties include passing gender-sensitive and human rights-based legislation and ensuring that SDG priorities are sufficiently resourced and that funding reaches the most vulnerable and excluded in society. It is therefore necessary to ensure the means to assess diverse needs across geographic, social, sexual, ethnic, cultural or economic categories, and for MPs to continually engage with the public on the SDGs through their representational duties.

The SDGs are interconnected with all sectors that play a role in their delivery. A well-functioning and coordinated committee system, with opportunity for committee reports to be debated and responded to in the plenary, allows for holistic oversight of national progress towards sustainable development. Some parliaments have established dedicated structures such as sustainable development committees, caucuses and units to support SDG mainstreaming across parliamentary work. Such bodies can act as a focal point for the type of partnership building across society that is necessary to implement the SDGs, including with civil society, the media, the private sector, independent oversight bodies and academia.

At international level, all countries are required to monitor SDG implementation and encouraged to report progress and challenges through voluntary national reviews (VNRs). Parliaments should have space to contribute to, debate and make recommendations on national SDG plans and report to the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and international bodies, including the UN Human Rights Council and the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Financing for the SDGs is a key consideration and parliament has a role in scrutinizing the availability and use of international resource flows from development cooperation, international taxation, trade and other means.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of SDGs and the 2030 Agenda would encompass the following:

The SDGs are integrated into parliament’s core functions. Parliament debates and scrutinizes national development plans, strategies, sectoral plans, statements and government reports to ensure alignment with and the localization of the SDGs.

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1 Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A self-assessment toolkit (IPU, 2016).
Parliament has reviewed the legal framework to ensure that it contributes to the achievement of national SDG priorities and the wider 2030 Agenda. There are established practices for parliament to assess how legislation impacts SDG attainment. Parliament’s role at all stages of the budget cycle (formulation, consideration and approval, implementation and audit) allows for systematic oversight of SDG delivery.

Parliament’s commitment to mainstreaming the SDGs is indicated in a strategic plan, policies and/or SDG action plans. SDGs are included in the terms of reference of all portfolio committees. Reports are debated in the plenary to help scrutinize progress across all goals. Mechanisms, such as a sustainable development committee, exist to oversee SDG progress and support SDG mainstreaming in parliament.

Parliament supports a whole-of-society approach to SDG delivery. Parliament is represented in national SDG coordination mechanisms, such as inter-ministerial committees. Rules of procedure allow for systematic engagement with stakeholders from civil society, the media, the private sector, and scientific and academic communities in monitoring SDG progress. There are well-established relationships with government and independent oversight bodies such as the state audit office, anti-corruption commissions or national human rights institutions that help provide technical inputs and reporting on the SDGs.

Parliament has transparent and clear mechanisms to inform the public on the SDGs and to gather evidence on national SDG implementation. MPs use the plenary and other parliamentary mechanisms to reflect the diverse needs of their constituents in relation to SDG priorities.

There is space for MPs to contribute to reporting to international bodies and processes on national SDG implementation. Parliament is informed of international SDG financing instruments and can scrutinize development financing.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Resolutions or motions in Hansard or other records of parliament indicating parliamentary commitment to the delivery of the SDGs
- Media reporting of parliament includes statements by parliamentary leadership and MPs of commitment to SDG delivery
- Committee terms of reference reflecting the roles across portfolio committees with regard to SDG delivery
- Articles in parliament’s strategic plan related to the SDGs or the existence of an SDG parliamentary action plan
- Explanatory memoranda/introductory speeches to bills and enacted legislation outline how they address the SDGs
- Committee reports incorporating evidence from a range of stakeholders, including hard-to-reach groups, on SDG delivery
- Availability of training or capacity development materials for MPs on the SDGs. Briefings and analysis from the parliamentary library.
- Communication materials and communication strategies indicating the role of parliament in SDG delivery

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.
Assessment criterion No. 1: Expression of parliament’s commitment to SDG delivery

Parliament has formally endorsed the SDGs or indicated its commitment to SDG delivery through motions, resolutions and debates of national plans, strategies or other SDG frameworks.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Practices in place to review legislation through an SDG lens

Parliamentary review of legislation indicates contribution to SDG achievement. Bills are accompanied by an assessment of impact on SDGs, such as through ministerial statements, explanatory memoranda or regulatory impact assessments.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 3: National budget reflects national SDG priorities

Parliament’s scrutiny of the budget indicates how funding is allocated to implement national SDG priorities and responds to the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Plans and policies to mainstream SDGs across parliament

Parliament’s strategic plan, policies and/or SDG action plans identify how the SDGs will be mainstreamed across parliament’s functions. Dedicated mechanisms may exist to support SDG mainstreaming, such as a sustainable development committee or sub-committee and/or a dedicated unit of the parliamentary secretariat.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:
Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 5: SDGs incorporated in the work of all parliamentary committees**

The terms of reference of parliamentary committees reflect their role in SDG implementation. Committees have developed tools such as checklists to assess policy and legislation against SDG objectives.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 6: Well-established relations with government regarding SDGs**

There is evidence of parliament making recommendations on government planning, policy and programmes related to SDG attainment, and of parliamentary engagement in international reporting on national SDG achievement.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**

**Sources for further reading**

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A self-assessment toolkit*, (IPU, 2016)
- Global Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Islamic Development Bank (IDB), *Parliament’s role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals*, (GOPAC, UNDP, IDB, 2017)
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), *Compendium of National Institutional Arrangements for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, (UN DESA, 2018)
Dimension 1.11.2 Human rights

Indicator: 1.11 Specific state policies
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension

This dimension looks at the critical role of parliament in protecting and promoting human rights. The realization of human rights worldwide is essential to peace, democracy and sustainable development. Parliament is required to contribute to the application of international human rights obligations and ensure that government action is in compliance with international law. Parliament should be actively engaged with international and regional human rights mechanisms, including the UN Human Rights Council, its universal periodic review (UPR) mechanism and human rights treaty bodies. In a number of countries, MPs are also included as members of national delegations at sessions of treaty bodies.

Parliaments are central to a national human rights framework. As representative bodies, they ensure the right to participation in the conduct of public affairs. In scrutinizing legislation and budgets, upholding the rule of law and overseeing state action across sectors, parliament is essential to realizing the entire spectrum of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights. Parliament’s role includes ensuring that the judiciary is independent, effective and accessible, that a free, independent and pluralistic media exists to protect the civic space and investigate human rights violations, and that national human rights institutions (NHRLs) operate effectively.

Parliamentary committees constitute an important means of human rights oversight. The establishment of a committee with an exclusive mandate on human rights, and on specific human rights issues such as gender equality or minority rights, can send a strong political message and help mainstream human rights across other committees. Other mechanisms that parliaments have used include caucuses or informal groups of MPs active in the area of human rights. As a guardian of human rights, parliament is responsible for ensuring that the needs and voices of minority, marginalized and vulnerable groups are incorporated throughout its work. Parliament plays a role in assessing the needs of groups such as asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons who may be left outside official statistics, and overseeing government policy and programmes to ensure responsiveness to those who may be left behind.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of human rights would encompass the following:

Parliament has ratified international treaties on human rights. Parliament has powers to receive answers from governments where treaties are not ratified or where there are specific reservations. Parliament has clear responsibilities in relation to reporting to human rights treaty bodies.

The national legal framework reflects human rights norms and obligations. The NHRI is established in law and has clearly defined relations with parliament. Parliament uses tools such as legislative impact

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2 Enshrined in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR).

assessments, human rights audits of the budget and human rights indicators to assess the impact of policy, legislation and public spending.

Parliament has institutional mechanisms to address human rights, such as dedicated human rights committees with powers of inquiry and investigation and sufficient resources. Human rights are also included in the mandate of parliament’s portfolio committees, which have transparent and routine procedures to engage with the NHRI, civil society and other stakeholders.

Services from the parliamentary secretariat assist MPs in remaining well-informed about international human rights treaties, the work of treaty bodies and national human rights issues. MPs have access to the necessary data to assess the human rights needs of different groups in society. Parliament’s communications highlight the role of parliament in promoting and protecting human rights, and inform the public of mechanisms to report human rights violations.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Articles of the constitution mandating parliament to ratify human rights treaties and incorporate them into national law
- Articles in national law referencing international human rights obligations
- Terms of reference for a body responsible for human rights in parliament, such as human rights, gender equality or minority rights committees
- Terms of reference of parliamentary committees indicating their roles in human rights protection and promotion
- Parliamentary committee reports indicating the evidence from and routine engagement with national human rights bodies and civil society
- Memoranda of understanding between the NHRI and parliament
- Parliamentary website contains information on parliament’s role in promoting and protecting human rights and how the public can report human rights violations

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal powers to promote and protect human rights

The constitution or laws mandate parliament to debate and ratify international human rights treaties and ensure that the national legal framework is consistent with international human rights obligations.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Engagement with international human rights bodies and processes
Parliament has a clear role in national consultation processes preceding the preparation of reports to treaty bodies, and in debating reports, overseeing recommendations, questioning government and establishing follow-up measures where needed. MPs participate as members of national delegations at sessions of treaty bodies.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Clearly defined engagement between parliament and the NHRI**

Parliament ensures that the NHRI exists, functions independently and has sufficient resources. The composition of the NHRI is approved by parliament. There are strong working relationships, including the duty of the NHRI to report to parliament and that of parliament to monitor the implementation of NHRI recommendations.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Existence of human rights infrastructure in parliament**

A body such as a parliamentary committee with an exclusive human rights mandate exists, with powers to assess legislation, government policy and action, to ensure compatibility with human rights obligations. Its duties include supporting the mainstreaming of human rights across committees.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 5: Human rights mainstreamed across parliamentary committees**

Human rights are a cross-cutting issue for all portfolio committees which have established practices to assess policy, legislation and budgets through a human rights lens.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:
Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 6: Routine public engagement on human rights**

Parliamentary proceedings, including debates and committee hearings, on human rights issues are communicated to the public and are open to public engagement. Proceedings include input from civil society, grass-roots organizations and individuals such as human rights defenders.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**

**Sources for further reading**

Dimension 1.11.3 Security sector

Indicator: 1.11 Specific state policies
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension
This dimension examines the role of parliament in security sector policy and governance. The security sector comprises all bodies with the legitimate authority to use force, including defence services, law enforcement, police, armed forces, border guards, paramilitary units, intelligence services and private security organizations. The principle that security services should be subordinate and accountable to democratically elected political leadership has long been seen as a basic condition for the effective functioning and well-being of democratic societies.

Parliament plays an essential role in ensuring that the security sector operates in a manner that is rooted in respect for the rule of law and human rights. Parliament is required to determine the legal framework for security policy and to oversee and debate policy and practice in the plenary and committees. As security sector organizations often use a large proportion of the national budget, it is essential that parliament monitors the use of these resources. In its oversight role, parliament ensures that the actions of the security sector are mediated through participatory and transparent processes which take into account the needs of all members of society. This includes recognizing that women, sexual minorities and persons with a non-binary gender identity face specific security challenges, and that measures are required to ensure that their voices are brought to bear in security sector oversight.

Usually, the government is seen as dominant in security policy and the nature of the security sector can present challenges with regard to effective parliamentary oversight. Governments may frame security issues as matters of national importance and state survival and, therefore, outside the bounds of parliamentary involvement. The need to often act quickly and maintain secrecy may be seen as incompatible with transparent and deliberative democratic participation. Therefore, parliaments need to ensure that there is effective legislation on data secrecy, which defines strict limits on data that are not available to parliament. This legislation should strictly stipulate data confidentiality, including degrees of secrecy, the procedure of data classification and declassification, data access and protection. The size and complex organization of security personnel and the nature of evolving security threats add complexity to the challenge of democratic controls and oversight if MPs lack full access to expertise and information. Globalization and cross-border threats have also increased the need for international cooperation and decision-making, in which parliament should have a role. Parliament should have permanent mechanisms for oversight of the security sector, which should be included in the mandates of different committees, particularly specialized committees addressing defence, law enforcement and intelligence, as well as in the mandates of other committees where oversight would be required.

Effective oversight relies on MPs having the ability to obtain information from the government on security sector issues using all oversight mechanisms. In some countries, parliaments may also have powers to approve or veto appointments to senior posts within the security institutions.

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6 Wolfgang Wagner, *Parliaments and Foreign Policy* (Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2017).
7 Including cyber-warfare, vulnerability of energy supplies, climate change, pandemics, and mass migration, surveillance and disinformation, and technological advances in artificial intelligence and autonomous weaponry.
As security is essential to public well-being, parliament as the representative body must ensure transparency and public input into security policy. Parliament may also establish an ombudsman or commission to investigate public complaints which reports to a security sector committee.

To work effectively in a highly technical area, MPs require sufficient resources and expertise. Parliament can also provide opportunities for inter-parliamentary cooperation to exchange best practices and lessons learned from parliamentary assemblies addressing security issues.8 This can encourage dialogue, build confidence, and facilitate peer-to-peer learning, thus contributing to the improvement of parliamentary oversight.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of security sector policy would encompass the following:

There is a comprehensive legal framework for oversight of the security sector. The constitution establishes civilian control and powers to hold the government accountable for security policy. MPs have powers to scrutinize, amend or reject legislation related to the security sector, and ensure that it is in conformity with human rights standards and international obligations.

The legal framework includes freedom of information laws which provide for powers to obtain information from the executive.9 There exists in law an ombudsman or similar public body which addresses public concerns or complaints about security issues, and which reports to parliament.

Parliament has well-established practices for security sector oversight, including that of policies, practices, budgets and appointments. MPs have the opportunity to debate security sector policy and practice in the plenary and committees. There is comprehensive oversight of the security sector including specialized committees and a mandate to scrutinize across relevant parliamentary committees, which have broad-ranging powers to investigate security sector issues and gather evidence, including summoning ministers, government and security sector representatives, calling on experts, holding hearings and carrying out inquiries.

Parliament is transparent regarding security sector oversight, subject to legal limitations. There are established mechanisms for parliament to engage with stakeholders including civil society regarding security and security-related issues.

There is expertise on security sector issues available within parliament. Training is available for staff and members of committees, including on security sector issues, human rights and issues related to women, peace and security. MPs receive support for participation in international meetings related to the security sector.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

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8 Including NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly.

9 See dimension 1.7.2.
• Articles in the constitution and legal framework identifying parliament’s role in security sector governance
• Terms of reference of parliamentary committees identifying responsibility for issues related to the security sector
• Publications such as committee reports on parliamentary inquiries into security issues, which identify evidence taken from stakeholders including ministers and government officials, the public and civil society
• Annual parliamentary reports or reviews on the functioning of all security services
• Press releases or pages on the parliamentary website providing public information on parliament’s role in security sector policy

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Constitutional provisions and legal framework ensure parliament’s role in security sector policy

The constitution ensures civilian control and oversight of the security sector. Parliament is responsible for adopting or amending the legal framework for the security sector.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Addressing public concerns or complaints about the security sector

There is an ombudsperson or similar body responsible for addressing public concerns or complaints about the security sector, which is legally accountable and reports to parliament.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No.3: Systematic oversight practice

There is evidence of a parliamentary committee (or committees) with responsibility for oversight of the security sector, law enforcement and intelligence. Security sector oversight is also included in the responsibilities of the different portfolio committees. Committees have the power to conduct investigations and inquiries, summon government and security sector representatives to give evidence, and examine security sector budgets. Parliamentary committees engage with stakeholders including civil society and the media on security-related issues.
Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Public engagement on security sector policy

Parliament issues information on its website or through press releases regarding debates, decisions, motions or laws related to the security sector. With the exception of closed hearings, and subject to legal limitations, the minutes of committee meetings and debates on security issues are made public.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 5: Resources and expertise are available

The parliamentary secretariat provides support to MPs, including committee staff, specialized research capacity, access to data and supporting documentation on security sector issues.

Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Sources for further reading

- Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and NATO Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), *Oversight and Guidance: Parliaments and Security Sector Governance*, (Geneva: DCAF, 2015)
• Wolfgang Wagner, *Parliaments and Foreign Policy*, (Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2017)
• United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Parliaments as partners supporting the Women, Peace and Security agenda* (Norway: Oslo Governance Centre, 2019)
**Dimension 1.11.4 Defence policy**

Indicator: 1.11 Specific state policies  
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension examines parliament’s powers on issues of defence policy, covering declarations of war, states of emergency, deployment of armed forces, sales and exports of arms, and protection of civilians during conflict. Civilian control of defence policy is essential in a well-functioning democratic society. Parliament is mandated to represent the interests of all members of society and to uphold human rights, acting as a safeguard against the unjustified and disproportionate use of force and ensuring that decisions on defence policy are aligned with public needs.  

The constitution and national legal provisions outline the extent of parliamentary involvement in the declaration of war and deployment of troops and during states of emergency. Some parliaments have considerable war powers, and MPs are allowed to debate and question the decision to deploy armed forces. In others, the government must only notify parliament and keep MPs informed of operations, and in some cases, there is minimal consultation with parliament. Parliaments may also be able to refuse to provide funds or be required to give their consent to additional funds for war, troop deployments and for arms procurement. Parliamentary systems usually have a more limited influence than in presidential democracies. However, in practice, there may be widespread understanding that a government would not deploy troops without having majority support in parliament. This requires political will to keep parliament engaged and informed, and relations of trust between branches of power.

As a guardian of human rights, parliament must ensure that defence policy remains subject to international law and under democratic control. This includes ensuring that, where arms are sold, their use is not in violation of international humanitarian law. It is also incumbent on parliament to ensure that defence policy reflects public needs, has public support and protects the rights of all, including minority groups. This includes understanding the gendered impact of conflict and taking measures to protect civilians, including women, girls and persons of all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. Transparent deliberation in parliament opens up defence decisions to public scrutiny, helping the public to understand the rationale for and risks of military engagement and emergency powers and how they comply with societal norms and human rights.

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10 Wolfgang Wagner, *Parliaments and Foreign Policy* (Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2017).

11 Some parliaments may also exempt certain issues, such as foreign troops on national territory, minor deployments, and arrangements with international organizations, and exception is also usually made for situations of urgency such as when a state is under attack. Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector: Principles, Mechanisms and Practices* (Geneva, 2003).

12 Wolfgang Wagner, *Parliaments and Foreign Policy* (Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam: 2017).

13 As reflected in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and related resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106, 2242, 2272 and 2647; and SDGs 5 and 16.
Indicator 1.11 – Specific state policies

To play a full role in defence policy, parliament also needs to have a strong role in security sector oversight and broad influence across foreign policy, which are covered in dimensions 1.11.3 and 1.11.5 respectively.

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of defence policy would encompass the following:

The constitution and legal framework give parliament powers to approve the use of military force, including the declaration of war and deployment of troops. Parliament is consulted prior to troop deployments and can investigate and debate the use of military force, including powers to summon the government to testify before parliament. Parliament can effectively block the use of military force if there is a majority in favour.

Parliament also has the power to authorize the joining of international defence organizations.

Parliament has the legal authority to scrutinize, amend and approve the defence budget, including the authorization of funding for each deployment of troops, and for arms sales and weapons procurement. Parliamentary committees have broad mandates over defence issues, including the overseeing of arms sales to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law. There exists a committee with the mandate to oversee gender mainstreaming in defence policy, including the composition of the armed forces and other defence bodies, the gendered impact of military and peacekeeping operations, and protection measures for women, girls and persons of different sexual orientation, gender identity and expression during conflict.¹⁴

Parliament has well-established communication practices and ensures that the public remains informed throughout situations of conflict and states of emergency. Parliament has access to support staff with independent expertise in defence policy.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Articles in the constitution or legal framework providing parliament with the power to authorize war and the deployment of troops, and to amend the defence budget
- Articles in the constitution or legal framework mandating parliament to play a role in the declaration, promulgation, prolongation and lifting of a state of emergency
- Hansard/parliamentary records on debates related to the declaration of war, deployment of troops or states of emergency
- Items on the parliamentary website or media articles related to parliament’s role in defence policy
- Terms of reference of parliamentary committees indicating their role in overseeing different aspects of defence policy
- Memoranda of understanding between defence sector complaint bodies and parliament

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal powers over the declaration of war and deployment of troops**

The constitution and legal framework ensure that parliament is consulted prior to use of military force and has the power to authorize or block a declaration of war and the deployment of troops.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 2: Powers over the defence sector budget**

Parliament’s role in scrutinizing and approving the national budget includes defence expenditures, arms procurement and revenue from sales of arms and equipment.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 3: Inclusion of defence policy in the mandate of parliamentary committees**

Parliamentary committees have a mandate to oversee and investigate different aspects of defence policy, including arms procurement, arms sales, issues concerning women, peace and security, and the gendered impact of conflict and crises.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 4: Existence of defence sector complaint bodies reporting to parliament**

Complaint bodies related to the defence sector, including human rights commissions and ombudsperson, exist and report to parliament. Such bodies routinely engage with the public, civil society, media and other stakeholders, and there are clear mechanisms to submit evidence on instances of human rights violations including gender-based violence.

Indicators for democratic parliaments, based on SDG targets 16.6 and 16.7
Indicator 1.11 – Specific state policies

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 5: Expert resources and public engagement

Adequate resources and the necessary expertise are available to parliament to support its work in the scrutiny of defence legislation and policy. There is evidence that parliament engages with the community in relation to defence issues.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Sources for further reading

- Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector: Principles, Mechanisms and Practices (Geneva, 2003)
- Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), Parliament’s role in defence procurement (Geneva, 2006)
- European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), Emergency Powers (Science and technique of democracy No.12, Strasbourg, 1995)
- Tom Ruys, Parliamentary war powers and the role of international law in foreign troop deployment decisions: The US-led coalition against “Islamic State” in Iraq and Syria (Oxford University Press, 2019)
- Seppe Tiitinen, Role of Parliament in the conduct of foreign relations, (Constitutional and Parliamentary Information, 1996)
• United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Parliaments as partners supporting the Women, Peace and Security agenda* (Norway: Oslo Governance Centre, 2019)
• Wolfgang Wagner, *Parliaments and Foreign Policy* (Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2017)
**Dimension 1.11.5 Foreign affairs**

Indicator: 1.11 Specific state policies  
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament  
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

**About the dimension**

This dimension examines parliament's role in foreign affairs and international cooperation. The 17 SDGs represent a transformative global roadmap requiring action at national and international levels. Foreign policy is critical to SDG implementation in fragile contexts, and the meeting of foreign policy objectives of security, stability and prosperity depends on global progress in achieving the SDGs. Parliament’s mandate to define foreign policy priorities is enshrined in constitutions worldwide, giving parliament a role in overseeing SDG integration across foreign policy areas.

International agreements (including treaties, instruments, conventions and bilateral agreements) on issues such as environmental policy, international trade and security have a direct impact on the public and affect the rights and obligations of all. In an increasingly globalized world, parliaments need to find new opportunities to influence foreign affairs to prevent a democratic deficit in decisions made above the state level. As such, it is important that international agreements are subject to transparent decision-making processes at the national level and the involvement of elected representatives to ensure that decisions have legitimacy and public acceptance.\(^\text{15}\)

Agreements that include significant national obligations usually require parliamentary approval or ratification, and powers differ according to whether parliament can accelerate the ratification process, change the text, express reservations, or refuse to ratify and return the matter for new negotiations.\(^\text{16}\) Parliament can also put pressure on the government for the passage of agreements that are not yet signed, using oversight mechanisms to receive answers and updates on progress. There is also increasing recognition of the importance of including elected representatives in the formulation of international agreements. In some countries the government is required to consult with foreign affairs committees before important decisions are taken on foreign policy issues.

Parliament and its portfolio committees are essential in overseeing the achievement of foreign policy priorities. Applying an SDG lens across sectors allows parliament to assess progress in key areas, including: supporting mutually-beneficial trade and investment policy, which can create trust between nations and help reduce inequality; overseeing accountability for and the impact of international financial agreements, including loans and development assistance;\(^\text{17}\) and ensuring that development support is gender- and conflict-sensitive.

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On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of foreign affairs would encompass the following:

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\(^{15}\) Seppe Tiitinen, *Role of Parliament in the conduct of foreign relations* (Constitutional and Parliamentary Information, 1996).


\(^{17}\) Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Guidelines for enhancing the engagement and contribution of parliaments to effective development cooperation* (IPU, 2020)
The constitution mandates the parliament to have a role in determining foreign policy priorities. Parliament is legally responsible for the ratification of international agreements, loan agreements and in-country programmes by international organizations.

Parliament can help formulate and amend international agreements. There is consultation between parliament and government before negotiations take place, MPs are kept informed of negotiating positions and parliamentary committees are engaged with negotiators. MPs can use oversight tools to question the government and have powers to submit private member bills and motions regarding the content of international agreements.

There is a legal basis for the government to report to parliament on the implementation of international agreements and activities of international organizations. Where a state is required to report to an international body, the report is debated in parliament first.

Committees across parliament play an active role in scrutinizing international financial agreements, including ensuring that development assistance has a lasting impact and is conflict- and gender-sensitive. Parliament has the power to amend loan agreements, in addition to accepting and rejecting them.

Parliament’s committee system reflects inter-linkages between foreign policy objectives and the SDGs. Committees addressing issues including health, education, gender equality and human rights have the remit to oversee how foreign policy in these areas supports sustainable human development.

The parliamentary secretariat provides MPs with support in terms of technical capacity and independent information about foreign affairs. Parliament communicates and engages with the public on foreign affairs issues, helping to ensure transparency and accountability of action taken at international level.

Assessment

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Articles in the constitution mandating parliament’s role in defining foreign policy priorities, and in ratifying international agreements
- Articles of international treaties, conventions or agreements mandating regular reporting by government to parliament
- Terms of reference of parliamentary committees indicating a role in oversight of international agreements
- Committee reports on foreign affairs issues
- Research briefings and informational material on foreign affairs produced by parliamentary research services or other bodies of the parliamentary secretariat

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

Assessment criterion No. 1: Legal mandate for parliament’s role in foreign affairs

The constitution provides parliament with the mandate to define foreign policy priorities and monitor government compliance with parliamentary resolutions on foreign affairs issues.
### Indicator 1.11 – Specific state policies

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

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**Assessment criterion No. 2: Powers relating to international agreements**

Parliament is responsible for ratifying international agreements. Parliament can propose amendments to international agreements, including financial agreements, in addition to accepting and rejecting such agreements.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

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**Assessment criterion No. 3: Routine oversight of foreign affairs**

Committees across parliament are engaged in monitoring international agreements and ensuring that foreign policy contributes to achieving the SDGs in the areas of their mandate. Parliament can establish committees to monitor specific international issues and the work of international organizations.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

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**Assessment criterion No. 4: Transparency of information**

The executive provides parliament with information on foreign affairs, implementation of international agreements and the work of international organizations.

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**Evidence for this assessment criterion:**

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Assessment criterion No. 5: Expert resources and public engagement

The parliament is provided with adequate resources and the necessary expertise to support its work in the scrutiny of foreign affairs legislation and policy. There is evidence that parliament engages with the community in relation to foreign affairs issues.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Recommendations for change

Sources for further reading

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Guidelines for enhancing the engagement and contribution of parliaments to effective development cooperation* (IPU, 2020)
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and World Bank (WB), *Parliamentary Oversight of International Agreements and Related Processes* (IPU, 2013)
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), *Parliamentary Involvement in International Affairs* (Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, New York, 2005)
- Adelphi, A Foreign Policy Perspective on the SDGs (Berlin, 2018),
- Seppe Tiitinen, *Role of Parliament in the conduct of foreign relations* (Constitutional and Parliamentary Information, 1996)
- Wolfgang Wagner, *Parliaments and Foreign Policy* (Department of Political Science and Public Administration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2017)
Dimension 1.11.6 Parliamentary diplomacy

Indicator: 1.11 Specific state policies
Sub-target: 1 Effective parliament
Target: 16.6 Effective, accountable and transparent parliament

About the dimension
This dimension examines the role of parliament in diplomacy. Parliamentary diplomacy is an important part of international cooperation, which provides a parliamentary perspective on global governance. By supporting political dialogue and mediation, parliamentary diplomacy plays a constructive and effective role in conflict prevention and crisis management, and contributes to reducing tensions and finding solutions to political and other international, regional and national challenges. It helps to strengthen dialogue between countries and increase mutual understanding. Parliamentary diplomacy can be conducted through bilateral relations between parliaments or through multilateral, international and regional, organizations and channels.

Relations between states are usually conducted by government, but there are strong reasons why democratically-elected MPs can have an impact on international relations. Engaging MPs across countries promotes common interests and values, opens new channels for dialogue and for sharing experience and expertise. As they do not represent the government’s position, MPs can operate with increased flexibility in reflecting their own positions and the views of their constituents, thus helping to raise complex issues between countries, such as democracy and human rights. Their mandate can help to democratize international affairs and represent the pluralism of society in the international arena.

Bilateral parliamentary diplomacy can take the form of incoming and outgoing parliamentary visits, organized by parliament or with development support. MPs are also often included in official delegations with the government, or there is space for meetings with MPs on bilateral state visits. Parliamentary friendship groups are organized more formally and involve regular meetings between MPs from different countries. They can promote the exchange of views between MPs in areas of shared interest, and discuss and offer solutions to complex international issues. In this way, bilateral parliamentary engagement can be useful to build understanding and foster agreement in areas where the government may not have had success. Various international bodies exist to support multilateral parliamentary diplomacy, including parliamentary assemblies at international and regional levels, organizations and networks.

Information gained through parliamentary diplomacy strengthens the work of MPs at the national level. It helps to connect decisions made at the international level with local realities and translate the concerns of the public into policy. Information gained through parliamentary diplomacy provides MPs with the means to play an active role in scrutinizing foreign policy and supporting the implementation of international agreements (reflected in dimension 1.11.5).

On the basis of a global comparative analysis of parliamentary practices and models in parliamentary development, an aspiring goal for parliaments in the domain of parliamentary diplomacy would encompass the following:

Parliamentary diplomacy activities have clear aims and objectives, determined through transparent, participatory and inclusive processes.

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There are well-established channels of communication with and support from the government (the foreign affairs ministry or related ministries) for parliamentary diplomacy activities.

Delegations for bilateral visits and to multilateral parliamentary bodies are inclusive and reflect the composition of parliament and diversity of society. Political, gender and age quotas for delegations are mandated in parliament’s rules. If international bodies require such quotas for parliamentary delegations, parliament respects them. Continuity of delegates and support staff helps to ensure understanding of how multilateral bodies operate and how to make an impact. Delegations are required to submit reports and share the resolutions, reports and recommendations adopted, which are distributed across parliament.

A specialized body or unit exists to coordinate the preparation, communication and reporting on parliamentary diplomacy activities. Such bodies produce regular summaries of the work of international organizations and the results of meetings and events, including follow-up action and how parliament has addressed resolutions and decisions made in multilateral bodies, and help to set future priorities for international engagements.

Parliament’s budget includes funding for international engagements. The parliamentary secretariat offers expert and administrative support to MPs undertaking international engagements, including briefings on agenda items and on preparing and amending resolutions in multilateral bodies. The public is informed about activities and outcomes of international engagements through parliament’s communication channels.

**Assessment**

The dimension is evaluated on the basis of several criteria that should be assessed separately. For each criterion, select one of the six descriptive grades (Non-existent, Poor, Basic, Good, Very good and Excellent) that corresponds best to your parliament, and provide details of the evidence on which the assessment is based.

The evidence for assessment of this dimension might include:

- Agendas of official bilateral engagements indicating parliamentary involvement
- Terms of reference of parliamentary committees indicating responsibility for international engagements
- Name lists for parliamentary delegations indicating a political, age and gender balance
- Service statements/organogram indicating that a department exists to support MPs with international engagements
- Reports from parliamentary committees/delegations/party groups on international engagements indicating the outcomes achieved
- Items in the parliament’s budget for parliamentary diplomacy activities

If relevant, additional comments or examples that support the assessment (such as references to external national, regional or international surveys and reports) can be provided.

**Assessment criterion No. 1: Procedures for determining parliamentary diplomacy activities**

Clear and transparent procedures are in place for deciding on parliamentary diplomacy activities and forming friendship groups. Procedures are participatory and inclusive in setting aims, objectives and agendas of activities and deciding on delegation members.
Indicator 1.11 – Specific state policies

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 2: Existence of specialized bodies of parliament

Dedicated bodies support parliamentary diplomacy, such as committees on international relations and on the work of regional and international parliamentary organizations. These bodies have the mandate to prepare, communicate and coordinate reporting on parliamentary diplomacy activities and ensure follow-up to decisions taken during activities.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 3: Parliamentary diplomacy reflects the pluralism of parliament

There are opportunities for all MPs to participate in parliamentary diplomacy activities and join parliamentary friendship groups. Parliament respects the rules of parliamentary delegation composition stipulated by international and regional organizations, and has in place quotas or other measures to ensure a political, age and gender balance in delegations.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

Assessment criterion No. 4: Reporting on outcomes of international and bilateral engagements

Reports following international engagements are produced and made available to all MPs. Parliament regularly reports on follow-up action taken as a result of parliamentary diplomacy, including how resolutions of multilateral bodies have been addressed. Parliament communicates all reports publicly.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 5: Well-established engagement with government**

Parliament receives support and information from the government prior to international engagements.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Assessment criterion No. 6: Specialized services from the parliamentary secretariat**

An international relations or other department exists to provide support to MPs to conduct international engagements.

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Evidence for this assessment criterion:

**Recommendations for change**

**Sources for further reading**

- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Parliamentary Diplomacy: Seminar for Members of the Parliament of East Timor*, (IPU, 2003)