Symposium on
“Building Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions and Public Administration for Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”

Global Parliamentary Report 2017
IPU and UNDP

Parliamentary Oversight:
Parliament’s Power to Hold Government to Account

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Honorary President of Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
Global Parliamentary Report

2012: Representation
Citizens’ changing expectations

2017: Oversight
Parliament’s power to hold government to account
Purpose of the report

A global perspective on how oversight is practiced by parliaments

Recommendations for parliaments, parties, government, civil society

A catalyst for a renewed focus on oversight
Why is oversight important?

- Responds to expectations of people today
- Key to achieve Agenda 2030 and SDGs
- A marker of parliament’s relevance in the 21st century
Why is oversight important?

- Improved policy
  - Identification of gaps in legislation
  - Value for money

- Improved process
  - More transparent government
  - Less corruption

- Democracy without oversight?
  - State becomes too strong
  - State becomes too weak
Oversight is political

“The important thing is to put government under pressure. Even if it is your own party that is in government.”

Baroness Gloria Hooper, Member of the House of Lords, United Kingdom
Who is responsible for oversight? Government? Opposition?

Percentage of MPs who agree or strongly agree with these statements:

- Oversight is the responsibility of all parliamentarians
- Oversight is mainly carried out by members of the opposition

In government: [Graph showing percentage agreement]
In opposition: [Graph showing percentage agreement]

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Political space for oversight

Protecting the rights of MPs to carry out oversight
Cases being examined by the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, 2016

Most common violations
1. Lack of fair trial and other unfair proceedings
2. Undue suspension and loss of parliamentary mandate
3. Violation of freedom of expression
4. Arbitrary detention of parliamentary mandate

459 MPs in 42 countries

Opposition party 336
Majority party 112
Independent/Others 11


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Oversight requires capacity - an effective system of oversight remains an aspiration in many parliaments.
The enabling environment for parliamentary oversight

Oversight and accountability: the parliamentary environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture</th>
<th>Processes</th>
<th>Relationships</th>
<th>MPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political space</td>
<td>Mandate</td>
<td>External oversight institutions</td>
<td>Incentives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>Powers</td>
<td>Civil society</td>
<td>Public demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of the opposition</td>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>Media</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Political parties</td>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Citizens</td>
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The network of oversight relationships

Formal and informal approaches

External oversight institutions (SAI; NHRI, Ombudspersons)

Relationships with stakeholders (civil society; citizen consultations etc)
Oversight requires personal commitment

«A parliamentarian who is not curious is a curious parliamentarian»

Michèle André, Senator, France
## Why is oversight difficult?

### Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Quote</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political environment</td>
<td>“a non-cooperative government that doesn’t tolerate the opposition”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(opposition MP from Guinea)</td>
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<td>Party politics</td>
<td>“fear of embarrassing government”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(MP from governing party in Mauritius)</td>
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<td>Resources</td>
<td>“lack of funding for committees”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(opposition MP from Ireland)</td>
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<td>Competing demands</td>
<td>“more often than not constituency issues take precedence over national issues”</td>
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<td>(MP from Bhutan)</td>
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<td>Parliamentary powers</td>
<td>“lack of implementation by the government of the recommendations of standing committees”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(MP from governing party in Pakistan)</td>
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<td>MPs’ commitment</td>
<td>“commitment from MPs to carry out oversight from implementation through to impact in our society”</td>
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<td>(opposition MP from Indonesia)</td>
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Incentives and motivations

**probit** – assessing the presence or absence of corruption

**effectiveness** – assessing the degree to which actions have their intended effects

**fidelity** – assessing the degree to which government follows the law

**efficiency** – assessing the ratio of costs to benefits

**equity** – assessing the fairness of government distribution of costs or benefits
Oversight is the marker of Parliament’s relevance in the 21st century
Oversight and SDGs

- Mainstreaming SDGs in parliament
- Assessing parliament’s preparedness for SDGs
- Oversight of national progress reports on SDGs
### Parliament’s own accountability

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<td>Parliament publishes an annual report on its oversight activities</td>
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<td>Parliament has a plan to increase its institutional capacity for oversight</td>
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<td>in coming years</td>
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<td>Parliament has done a review of performance of its oversight role in the last</td>
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<td>five years</td>
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<td>Parliament has a system to monitor how effectively it performs its oversight</td>
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<td>role</td>
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Source: IPU/UNDP (2016). *Questionnaire for parliaments, Question 2 (base for question: 103 parliamentary chambers).*
Main findings

Parliamentary oversight is and will remain a political activity

An effective system of oversight remains an aspiration for many parliaments

Most MPs express commitment to oversight. But in practice, prioritization and capacity issues often limit their engagement in oversight activities

Oversight is a marker of parliament’s relevance in the 21st century
Recommendations for change
Thank you