

Briefing Document

Future perspectives on parliamentary work

ParlAmericas' briefing documents present comparative research, policy considerations, and legislative action items on issues that matter to parliamentarians, with a focus on our membership in the Americas and Caribbean region.

Anticipatory governance refers to the application of **strategic foresight** – a discipline that applies a systematic approach to the study of the future – to the functioning of public institutions and political and administrative decision-making at all levels. Rather than attempt to predict a single, most likely future, it seeks to explore various possible futures and facilitate understanding of how decision-makers' current strategies may be exposed to disruption due to the assumptions they are based upon.¹

In other words, as defined by UNESCO, it is about “***governing in the present to adapt to or shape uncertain futures.***”²

This approach can be adapted to parliamentary work in accordance with national capacities and contexts. It can serve as a tool for building a sustainable future by viewing the **future as an opportunity for transformation beginning in the present** and by incorporating diverse voices and social expectations.

Applying a future-oriented perspective within the parliamentary sphere can significantly contribute to:³

- Anticipating challenges and adopting preventative measures, allowing **parliaments to adapt** to changes in the political, social, economic, and technological context;
- Fostering **innovation and creativity** in legislative and policy development;
- Strengthening **efficient and effective** governance of public affairs; and
- Promoting broader and more sustained participation over time, based on **collective, multisectoral, and intergenerational intelligence**, which can enhance public confidence in parliaments.

In this way, parliaments can ensure **better representation of the public and more effective allocation of resources**, directing their efforts towards addressing the specific needs of various population groups. This strengthens their essential role as spaces for democratic representation.

The following are **potential avenues for incorporating a future-oriented vision into parliamentary work**. This builds on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) publication [The Use of Futures in Parliaments](#), the outcome document of the [Third World Summit of the Committees of the Future](#) of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the discussions held during the 21st ParlAmericas Plenary Assembly and 9th Gathering of the Open Parliament Network, [Legislating for the Future: Harnessing Anticipatory Governance in Parliamentary Action](#).

¹ [Strategic Foresight Toolkit for Resilient Public Policy](#). OECD, 2025

² [Anticipatory Governance | UNESCO Open Learning](#). UNESCO, 2021. (Also noted in the outcome document of the [Third World Summit of the Committees of the Future](#), Chile, 2025)

³ [The Use of Futures in Parliaments: A Guide for Transformative Action](#). UNDP, 2024

Actions to apply a future-oriented perspective in parliamentary work

Capacity strengthening

- **OFFER TRAINING SESSIONS:** Support parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in developing their knowledge, capacity, and skills in key areas for the application of a future-oriented perspective in parliamentary work,⁴ including:
- ◆ **Overcoming the tendency to view the future through the lens of the past:** to avoid reacting based on what is known or what has already happened, policies and laws that promote preventative and proactive approaches should be developed, facilitating anticipatory action based on analysis of possible and emerging futures.
 - ◆ **Legislative impact analysis:** the consideration of a diversity of future scenarios and their varying impacts on different population groups, such as young people and women, across various domains, such as economic, social, and climate.
 - ◆ **Flexibility and adaptability:** such as the inclusion of review clauses in laws or by developing systems for evaluating them.
 - ◆ **Long-term vision:** by aligning laws with SDGs or national planning processes, as well as analysis of the intergenerational implications of legislation.
 - ◆ **Participation and social dialogue:** increasing parliamentary openness by harnessing collective intelligence and facilitating the inclusion of historically marginalized groups.⁵
 - ◆ **Consideration of intergenerational equity:** promoting the protection of the rights and interests of future generations, as well as encouraging the active participation of young people in long-term policymaking, particularly on issues that are key to their aspirations and concerns.
- **PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND USE OF STRATEGIC FORESIGHT METHODOLOGIES:** Strategic foresight is a useful and practical methodology that can make parliamentary work more proactive in challenging contexts. Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff can take advantage of opportunities to exchange experiences with their peers and make use of the resources published by various international organizations. Organizations such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have resources and free training courses available – some of which are included in the “Additional Resources” section of this tool.

⁴ The following sources were used to inform this list: [The Use of Futures in Parliaments](#) UND., 2024 (p. 10); [Anticipatory Governance Capabilities and Legislative Foresight to Strengthen Innovation and Adaptation in Government Institutions \[in Spanish\]](#), Javier Medina (ECLAC), 2025.

⁵ The ParlAmericas publication [What We Heard: Survey of Caribbean Women's Organisations on their Engagement with Parliaments](#), contains a list of barriers that women's organizations face when interacting or engaging effectively with parliaments.

- **INVEST IN PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH CAPACITY TO CONDUCT NON-PARTISAN, FORWARD-LOOKING, AND PROSPECTIVE STUDIES AND ANALYSES:** Providing parliamentarians with access to information that incorporates a future-oriented perspective and applies foresight capacities helps ensure that this type of knowledge is leveraged when bills are studied and debated by standing committees.


For more information on **strategic foresight methodologies**, the following resources can be consulted:


- The [UN Strategic Foresight Guide](#), developed by the UN Futures Lab/Global Hub, is a practical introductory resource on key concepts that provides an overview of the main foresight tools.
- The report [Exploring Futures: A Guide to Driving Change, Foreseeing Trends](#) (available in Spanish), from the UNDP Office in Argentina, presents a practical application of strategic foresight tools, exploring possible future scenarios and detecting signs of change.
- The publication by Save the Children and the School of International Futures (SOIF), [The Future is Ours: Strategic Foresight Toolkit – Making Better Decisions](#), provides a detailed explanation of how to apply more than 10 strategic foresight methodologies.
- UNDP's [Democratizing Futures: Tools to Anticipate and Co-Creat e Public Policies with Youth](#) is a practical guide to introducing and designing futures processes through multi-stakeholder strategies. It promotes collaborative and anticipatory governance, particularly in the development and implementation of public policies with young people.


Work in parliamentary committees

- **CREATE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES OF THE FUTURE OR SIMILAR ENTITIES:** These bodies can be set up within parliaments – in accordance with the political context, institutional design, and administrative structure – to have responsibility for incorporating a future-oriented perspective into legislative drafting and review. One option for this kind of body is for a specific futures committee to be established to analyze issues from a strategic foresight approach and promote anticipatory governance. Currently in the region, this kind of committee exists in the Senate and Chamber of Deputies of Chile, as a permanent advisory committee of the Senate of Paraguay, and as a special bicameral committee of the Parliament of Uruguay. Additional information on each of these committees is provided below.

 The [Senate of Chile's Committee on Future Challenges, Science, Technology, and Innovation](#) was created in 2011.⁶ The main purpose of this committee is to identify and analyze future national challenges, assessing their potential impacts and proposing legislative measures to address them in advance. Its functions include developing legislative and public policy proposals on issues such as technology, climate change, health, and education. The committee includes representatives from all political parties. Its work is carried out through workshops and consultations with specialists, incorporating prospective methodologies. In addition, it maintains active ties with universities and research centres.

 The Chamber of Deputies also has a [Permanent Committee on the Future, Science, Technology, Knowledge, and Innovation](#), which seeks to promote scientific, technological, and innovative development in the country. Among other approaches, its work is carried out by requesting reports and collaborating with external actors, such as universities and research centres, thereby strengthening the link between legislative work and knowledge production.⁷

 The [Permanent Advisory Committee on Science, Technology, Innovation, and the Future of the Chamber of Senators of Paraguay](#)⁸ was created in 2023 in order to assess bills related to scientific research and development and undertake policy planning related to science, technology, and innovation, as well as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and technology transfer in all its applications. In addition, it is responsible for ensuring national compliance with corresponding international treaties. Its work is undertaken through strategic planning processes seeking to strengthen anticipatory understanding and contribute to informed decision-making in the legislative sphere.

 The [Special Committee on Futures of the Parliament of Uruguay](#)⁹ was established in 2021 as a bicameral body. It seeks to incorporate a forward-looking perspective into current decision-making. Its main functions include preparing reports on strategic issues, such as the future of work, evolutionary artificial intelligence, responsible anticipation, and the rights of future generations. It is made up of parliamentarians and has an external parliamentary advisory group that supports its technical capabilities and expertise. Its work is based on innovative and collaborative approaches, using methodologies such as collective intelligence and futures literacy. Its contributions are translated into reports and recommendations for legislative decision-making.

*For more information on regional experiences, please contact the **International Secretariat of ParlAmericas**.*

⁶ Sources: [Anticipatory governance](#) [in Spanish]. Library of the National Congress of Chile, 2024; [Anticipatory Governance. An Institutional Framework for Prospective Planning in Chile](#) [In Spanish], Library of the National Congress of Chile, 2024; [The Use of Futures in Parliaments](#), UNDP, 2024 (p. 26)

⁷ On occasion, the committee requests that universities prepare reports on the impacts of selected topics on society. For example, one was requested on the impact of AI on society, highlighting its potential and dangers related to economic, labour, sociological, political, and other dimensions of life, as well as its potential for weakening intellectual functioning.

⁸ Source: [Proposed resolution creating the Permanent Advisory Committee on Science, Technology, Innovation, and the Future](#) [in Spanish], 2023

⁹ Source: [The Use of Futures in Parliaments](#). UNDP, 2024 (p. 26)

- **INCORPORATE AN ANTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE PERSPECTIVE INTO THE WORK OF EXISTING COMMITTEES:** As an alternative to creating a new committee responsible for future-oriented work, these concepts can be incorporated into existing entities. This option can be implemented either by integrating foresight methodologies into the work of existing committees or by modifying the structure or scope of an existing committee, for example by creating a subcommittee or an *ad hoc* working group.



KEY STEPS FOR ESTABLISHING A COMMITTEE OF THE FUTURE

1. **ASSESS THE PARLIAMENTARY CONTEXT:** Evaluate whether it is more appropriate to create a new parliamentary committee or adapt an existing one based on the parliamentary context. This analysis should consider current regulations, administrative processes, political context, and availability of resources. It is also key to identify parliamentary staff who can help to facilitate these initial steps.
2. **ESTABLISH A ROADMAP:** Develop a roadmap that clearly defines the objectives, thematic areas, and prioritization criteria for the committee's work, with an explicit mandate to integrate a future-oriented perspective in the development and review of legislation.
3. **LEVERAGE COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE:** Draw from the expertise of specialists in anticipatory governance and strategic foresight, as well as international lessons learned and good practices. Promote the active participation of civil society and academia in the committee's work, integrating diverse perspectives to analyze potential differential impacts of legislative measures on diverse population groups, such as women and youth.
4. **STRENGTHEN CAPACITIES:** Support parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, especially members of the committee, in developing key knowledge, capacities, and skills to apply a future-oriented perspective in legislative work.

Additional resource:

ECLAC published the report [*Anticipatory Governance and Legislative Foresight: An Imperative for Latin America and the Caribbean*](#), which highlights the urgency of strengthening anticipatory capacities in response to the third development trap. The report proposes **creating and strengthening parliamentary committees of the future** to reinforce the role of parliaments in this task; page 36 of the report provides specific recommendations for their implementation in the region.

Development of a long-term legislative agenda

- **BUILDING A CONSENSUS-BASED LEGISLATIVE AGENDA:** Integrating a vision for the future into legislative activities requires identifying common goals and developing medium- and long-term plans that promote sustainable development. Parliaments should therefore determine priority issues and create a legislative roadmap to guide strategic and coordinated action on these themes.

The **Chamber of Deputies of Mexico** developed a [Legislative Strategy for the 2030 Agenda](#) [in Spanish] as a roadmap to identify laws in need of reform in order to meet the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Connection with open parliament and representation initiatives

- **LEVERAGE EXISTING OPEN PARLIAMENT STRUCTURES TO INCORPORATE A FUTURE-ORIENTED VISION:** Open parliament seeks to bring the public closer to legislative institutions by promoting transparency, accountability, public participation, and ethics. This approach could be complemented by the incorporation of foresight methodologies into legislative openness committees, transparency or participation offices, and action plans. Similarly, fostering openness within futures committees can strengthen their work – for example, by promoting participatory processes. The document [Standards for Legislative Openness in Committee Work](#) can help to guide this coordination.
- **INTEGRATE A FUTURE-ORIENTED PERSPECTIVE INTO PARLIAMENTARY MECHANISMS FOR GENDER EQUALITY:** Adopting a future-oriented perspective in parliamentary work can help to further gender equality. Using strategic foresight tools enables us to anticipate the different impacts that social, technological, climatic, and economic changes may have on women and girls, as well as other historically marginalized groups. This forward-looking approach can support existing institutional efforts around gender equality through the evaluation of measures developed by parliamentary technical units, women’s secretariats, gender focal points, and multiparty caucuses for equality. These spaces can help to provide a valuable perspective on how present-day decisions could affect women differently. To learn more about this approach, consult [Bridging Legislative Agendas: Exploring Synergies between Open Parliament and Gender Equality](#) [in Spanish], which offers strategies for coordinating diverse political advocacy agendas.
- **ENHANCE COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE, PLURALISM, AND REPRESENTATION:** Strengthening collective intelligence, pluralism, and representation is essential for integrating a future-oriented perspective into parliamentary work. This involves fostering multisectoral and intergenerational spaces for exchange that incorporate diverse voices and knowledge, avoiding the perpetuation of existing inequalities and exclusions. These spaces should feature active involvement of civil

society organizations, young people, the media, specialists, academia, the private sector, and public institutions from different government sectors and levels. In particular, it is crucial to engage with individuals and organizations working to promote gender equality and protect the rights of marginalized groups. Their contributions broaden understanding of possible futures and strengthen the legitimacy of parliamentary decisions. The [Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process](#) toolkit can be consulted as a practical resource.

- **FACILITATE THE CONTRIBUTION OF SPECIALISTS TO PARLIAMENTARY WORK THROUGH DISAGGREGATED DATA¹⁰ AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS:** Working with specialists and drawing upon disaggregated data and future projections can improve the evidence base for parliamentary decision-making by providing insight into emerging trends and the differentiated impact of policies. This enables the anticipation of the potential needs of population groups such as women, persons with disabilities, young people, and Indigenous peoples, and helps to guide parliamentary work towards building more just and sustainable futures.¹¹

¹⁰ For additional information on databases related to gender equality, climate change and sustainable development, and open parliament, ParlAmericas has compiled a [list](#) of selected resources (pg. 8-15).

¹¹ ParlAmericas and the International Science Council, through its Regional Focal Point for Latin America and the Caribbean, have a pilot program that connects parliamentarians with leading scientists with varied expertise. For more information, please contact the International Secretariat of ParlAmericas.

Additional resources

- [Introductory Course on Anticipatory Governance and Legislative Foresight](#), ECLAC, 2025.
(Available in Spanish)
- [Anticipatory Governance and Legislative Foresight: An Imperative for Latin America and the Caribbean](#), ECLAC, 2025
- [Strategic Foresight Toolkit for Resilient Public Policy](#), OECD, 2025
- [Anticipatory Governance](#), webpage, OECD
- [Bridging Legislative Agendas: Exploring Synergies between Open Parliament and Gender Equality](#), ParlAmericas, 2025 (Available in Spanish)
- [Standards for Legislative Openness in Committee Work](#), ParlAmericas, 2023
- [Toolkit: Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process](#), ParlAmericas
- [Road Map Towards Legislative Openness 2.0](#), ParlAmericas, 2022
- [Intersectionality](#), ParlAmericas
- [Democratizing Futures: Tools to Anticipate and Co-Create Public Policies with Youth](#), UNDP, 2025
- [The Use of Futures in Parliaments: A Guide for Transformative Action](#), UNDP, 2024
- [Foresight Playbook - Overview of Foresight Tools](#), UNDP, 2022
- [The Future is Ours: Strategic Foresight Toolkit – Making Better Decisions](#), Save the Children and School of International Futures (SOIF), 2019
- [UN Strategic Foresight Guide](#), UN Futures Lab/Global Hub, 2023



This publication was made possible in part by the generous support of the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada. Published in July 2025.