

REPORT

World e-Parliament Conference 2007

and related meetings

9 - 10 - 11 - 12 October 2007 // Geneva



United Nations



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Disclaimer

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Foreword

Since the closing of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in November 2005, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) have worked together to establish a framework that could help parliaments around the world strengthen their ability to harness information and communication technologies (ICT) to better discharge their functions, connect with their constituencies and cooperate with each other, and, at the same time, to engage legislatures and their members in promoting the Information Society principles that emerged at the WSIS.

The initial commitment of our organizations, followed by a consultative process with key parliamentary leaders, gave life to the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, a worldwide alliance of partners that has become a hub for sharing knowledge and information in this domain among parliaments, governments, civil society, business and the international community. The participation of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament has provided a major contribution since the Global Centre's inception.

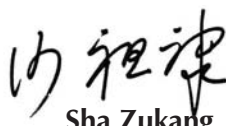
Our joint efforts were reinforced in 2006 by the establishment of the subgroup on ICT and Parliaments, facilitated by UNDESA and the IPU, within the WSIS Action Line dedicated to the role of public governance authorities in the promotion of ICT for development.

Yet, a long and challenging path is unfolding ahead of us to ensure that such a unique framework, through its global exchange of knowledge, can truly benefit all parliaments around the world - with no distinction of development levels – and the citizens they represent.

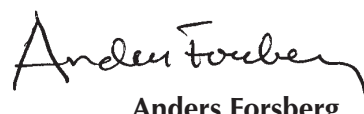
With the successful organization of the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament we feel that an important step has been accomplished in this direction. We look forward with renovated commitment and dedication to providing continuity to this joint work in the next years.



Anders Johnsson
Secretary General
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for Economic and Social Affairs
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Content

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Discussion paper.....	4
3. Opening addresses.....	17
4. Keynote address.....	24
5. Leadership and Vision for ICT in Parliament.....	30
6. ICT in Parliament: Organizational Challenges.....	32
7. Open Standards and Collaborative Software in Parliamentary Information Systems.....	35
8. Enhancing Dialogue between Citizens and Parliaments through ICT.....	40
9. Network of IT Officials of Latin American Parliaments.....	43
10. Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament.....	46
11. Conclusions and recommendations.....	47
12. Annexes.....	49
- Picture references.....	49
- Agendas.....	50

Introduction

The World e-Parliament Conference 2007 took place in Geneva on 11 October 2007. The event, jointly organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, brought together 70 delegations from around the world composed of members of parliament, secretaries general, ICT directors and staff, librarians, research and legislative officials. They were joined by representatives of the civil society and the business community, academics, and experts and staff of international organizations.

The event intended to provide for the first time a global multi-stakeholder forum to exchange views and experiences, analyse successful approaches, and identify best practices on the use of new technologies to modernize parliamentary processes, strengthen oversight capabilities and improve the dialogue between parliaments, legislators and citizens.

The Conference, held purposefully the day after the closing of the 117th IPU Assembly and the Meeting of the Association of the Secretaries General of Parliaments, was preceded by two related meetings: *Towards a Network of ICT Officials of Latin American*



Parliaments, organized on 9 October by the Inter-American Development Bank and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament; and, the International Workshop *e-Parliament: Managing Innovation* held on 10 October by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. Following the Conference, the first face-to-face *Meeting of members of the Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament* took place on 12 October. The Global Network was set up by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament in May 2007 as an online platform through which ICT experts could exchange information on the use of technologies in parliament.

Concrete outcomes of this four-day long activity include the establishment of the Network of IT Officials of Latin American Parliaments, which will initially work on joint studies concerning technologies in legislatures - such as mobile tools, legislative websites, and security issues - and on the preparation of an e-learning activity on open document standards; the agreement by the majority of the members of the Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament on modalities of work and thematic areas of priority for the Network; and, broad consensus by participants, both at the International Workshop and at the Conference, around issues and concerns to which particular attention should be paid by different parliaments' stakeholders while embarking on or implementing e-parliament.

A summary of the presentations, of practices and innovative experiences showcased during the events, as well as of the discussions held in plenary and in related meetings, is presented in this document.

For purposes of clarity, however, the Report

first reproduces the discussion paper that served as a guideline for presenters, discussants and participants throughout the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings. This is followed by the opening remarks of the representatives of the co-organizing organizations and the conference keynote address, which together set the institutional framework and rationale for this unique event. Both the International Workshop and Conference proceedings are then summarized in four chapters under the broad headings that facilitated the organization of the work: Leadership and Vision for ICT in Parliament; ICT in Parliament: Organizational Challenges; Open Standards and Collaborative Software in Parliamentary Information Systems; Enhancing Dialogue between Citizens and Parliaments through ICT.

Before the Conclusions and Recommendations that emerged from the discussions, two specific sections of the Report are dedicated to the meetings that gathered IT officials of Latin American Parliaments and members of the Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament.

The outcomes of the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and related meetings should not be seen in isolation from the rest of the work undertaken through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. The results achieved built on the extensive efforts made in the past months to bring together the dispersed knowledge and the many actors and fragmented processes that too often work separately from each other. These results are the building blocks on which the World e-Parliament Report, to be released in 2008, is laying its foundations.

Discussion paper

ICT in Parliaments: current practices, future possibilities¹

1. Introduction

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have become essential in supporting the work of legislative bodies throughout the world. As these technologies have matured and grown in sophistication, they have acquired the necessary flexibility and capabilities to assist legislatures in their most important responsibilities: making the laws that guide the nation; conducting oversight of the executive as it carries out its mandates; and communicating with the citizens, who determine who shall represent them. In today's "wired world" parliaments must capitalize on the benefits of ICT to function effectively, to interact with the public, and to collaborate with other parliaments around the world.

As parliaments employ new technologies, they must address many of the issues that are inherent in the global effort to achieve an equitable and inclusive information society that strengthens the democratic process.

These include ensuring all citizens access to information, harnessing the newly emerging tools for participation, and maintaining a transparent legislature whose actions and decisions can be known and understood in a timely way. The ways in which parliaments apply technology in their own environment will reflect their commitment to these ideals and influence the nature of the information society within their country. It will also impact on their ability to cooperate with other parliaments and to contribute to global ef-

forts to promote a people-centered information society.

To achieve these goals, and to build a technical infrastructure that is directly supportive of the work of the parliamentary body in a globalized world, there must be a shared vision and strategic plan that encompasses the goals and objectives for the legislature's use of ICT. This vision and plan must be endorsed by the key stakeholders in a parliament – the members, officials, chairs of committee, and the secretariat - and must be managed effectively by the legislature's highest officials.

Sound judgment is also needed. There are risks when technology is pushed as an end in itself without adequate consideration of the issues it will address for the legislature. At the same time it must be employed creatively; otherwise it merely becomes a more modern way of doing the work of the legislature, perhaps more efficiently but not necessarily more effectively. And to be truly transforming, as some hope, it must be used with a full understanding of the complex nature of the legislative process and of the positive changes it may bring about.

In today's world, ICT in parliaments is becoming both a collaborative and an international enterprise. In that respect it resembles the legislative process itself which requires communication and cooperation from the different parts of the legislative body to achieve

1. Jeffrey C. Griffith, Senior Advisor of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, is the lead author of the discussion paper.

effective results. In addition, collaboration facilitates common approaches, advances open standards, and enables parliaments to learn from each other's experiences.

This discussion paper describes briefly the history of ICT in legislative bodies, summarizes current practices, assesses the potential impact of some of the newest technologies and trends, considers some of the key requirements for the successful introduction and management of ICT, and underlines the importance of ICT in furthering the international presence of parliaments and in fostering communication and exchange of information with other legislatures and with citizens.

2. ICT in Parliament: before the Internet

Before the Internet, ICT were useful to parliaments for certain basic operations, but they were not critical in conducting their most important functions. As it did for many other institutions, ICT improved the efficiency of a number of administrative tasks such as managing payroll and maintaining personnel information. Computers also became useful in printing operations, leading to the more rapid and efficient publication and distribution of bills, agendas, Hansards, and other official documents.

The development of multi-tasking computers and operating systems in the late 1970s led to some of the earliest and most rudimentary forms of knowledge management, such as the online retrieval and display of limited numbers of brief text records that could be used to track the status of bills. This also allowed for the development of some of the first versions of alerting services, in which paper or cards containing the newest information about bills or related policy

information that had been entered into the computer could be mailed, through the traditional manual delivery system, to recipients who requested such notifications.

Computers also began to be useful for managing correspondence, and in this way they helped some legislators keep track of, and respond to, letters and other communications received from their constituents. The earliest e-mail systems, however, supported communications only with others who used the same system. E-mail services offered by different vendors could not communicate with each other.

As helpful as these technologies were, they suffered from the limitations of being proprietary and were seldom interoperable. They required large amounts of computing power, highly centralized control, and costly development efforts for returns that were not always easy to quantify or justify. Computers were expensive and communications between them were slow.

The advent of the personal computer (PC) changed some of the dynamics of control and lowered some of the costs of development, but still did not have the impact that was to come with the Internet and the Web. It is true that the PC made technology more directly accessible to individuals and became essential for performing many "personal" tasks. But for ICT to have a fundamental effect on the work of legislatures, which demanded high speed, seamless communication and computing power that provided ready access to people, information, and ideas, the Internet and the Web had to be invented.

3. The state of ICT in Parliament today

The Internet and the Web changed everything. Communications became rapid and interoperability significantly improved. While many systems continued to be proprietary, the exchange of documents and information became easier. The personal computer, which had been primarily a local device, became a tool that allowed worldwide access and, in some cases, worldwide exposure. These changes in the underlying technical infrastructure led to the development of systems and services that have become critical for legislative bodies.

Preparing and Managing Documents

Printed documents, such as drafts of proposed legislation, amendments, committee reports, and the text of debates, are the core records of legislatures. These documents must be prepared quickly, efficiently, and accurately. They must be distributed easily and then amended, revised, and redistributed just as easily. Modern ICT enable this to occur in a way that provides Members and committees more time and flexibility to consider and to craft their proposals and their reports.

Good drafting systems, with their associated document management systems, are a fundamental requirement for legislatures. ICT provide a number of options that can be developed to accommodate requirements based on a legislature's specific procedures (for example, where does proposed legislation originate, who can amend it, who prepares the final version?) and practices (is there a drafting office, can Members prepare their own amendments, is the final text codified into the existing body of law?). Increasingly important are the variety of intended uses of the texts and the markup symbols used to

"tag" the text so that its content and structural elements can be more accurately interpreted by computers.

There is a concerted effort within the ICT community and some legislatures to use open standards such as XML (eXtensible Markup Language) to prepare text so that it can be processed more readily by more systems. The use of open standards is an important goal because it extends the accessibility of legislative documents, not only within the parliament, but between the legislative and the executive powers, between parliaments and the civil society, and internationally among parliaments. There are several significant challenges, however, that must be addressed in achieving this goal.

First, drafting systems that can accommodate open standards are not yet as easy to use as more common word processing software. There is good progress in this area, but the extensive installed base of older proprietary software can act as a constraint on the implementation of newer systems and standards.

Second, open standards such as XML require an investment of time and effort by key stakeholders to agree on the format of official documents and on the tags to be used to mark them up. This can sometimes be an easier task for legislatures that do not already have an investment in an existing drafting system. Regardless of whether a new or a replacement system is being developed, however, it is important to take note of the effort needed to reach agreement on how the standard will apply.

Third, drafting systems and their associated document management systems must sometimes be tailored to meet the procedures



and practices of a particular legislature. Customization enables efficiency but may add to cost in both the development phase and subsequent updates.

Despite these challenges, however, there is significant long-term value in adopting open standards such as XML for preparing legislative documents. And as this use of open standards becomes more widespread in both the public and private sector, this value will become even more important for parliaments.

Supporting Committees

A system for preparing and managing documents is a key building block for supporting committees, which in many legislatures are the “policy workshops” where bills are closely reviewed, debated, revised, and initially approved or disapproved. Committees may also prepare reports that summarize their deliberations and recommendations regarding specific proposals.

A critical requirement for committees, therefore, is a drafting and document management system that supports the editing of bill texts, the preparation of amendments, and the final report of the committee. This system should produce and manage documents so that they can be easily incorporated into or linked to other documents, distributed to Members of

the committee and to the public, and reported to the full legislature.

In the course of their deliberations, committees may also hold hearings that involve witnesses, some of whom can be located in places other than the hearing room; the taking of testimony, both written and oral; and the receipt of evidence or testimony in a variety of formats. Committees need systems that support all of these modes of information input and the preparation of a report that permits both verbatim reporting and summarization.

Committees are increasingly turning to audio and video technologies to make their deliberations available in real time. This can include the use of TV and satellite channels, as well as webcasting. With sufficient technical and staffing resources, some are also able to maintain an electronic archive that allows on-demand access after the event. Audio and video webcasting and the maintenance of an archive are more costly methods of providing a record of committee activities than printed documents. But the ability to observe committees at work without being present in the room is increasingly valuable to staff, the press, and others in the civil society. Many parliaments are seeking to do more in terms of real time webcasting and providing on-demand access.

Finally of note is the use by committees of websites to provide their own Members and the public with access to their Membership lists, areas of competence or jurisdiction, schedules, agendas, webcasts of meetings, records of activities, and copies of legislation and related documents within their purview. Websites are becoming important resources for the committees themselves and for citizens, civil society groups, the press, government agencies, and others who follow their work.

Supporting Plenary/Floor Activities

The technologies required to support plenary or floor activities are much the same as those needed by committees. There must be a verbatim record of debate and a record of votes and of other actions that occurred during a session.

A number of legislatures broadcast and/or webcast their proceedings for themselves and for the public at large, and provide archival access. Some offer text summaries of floor actions in near real time using sophisticated recording and transcription technology; others have reduced the time of publication of verbatim debate to as little as two hours. Many parliaments use technology to prepare and publish within a day, or at least a few days, an official record of the debate and actions taken in plenary session.

The votes of individual Members are important in many legislatures, and technology is used by some to support electronic voting. This use of ICT can make the process more efficient, more visible when the votes are displayed on a large screen, and easier to record and maintain as an official record. Some parliaments have considered allowing remote or offsite voting, but this does not appear to be widespread at this time.

Knowledge Management: Informing the Legislator

Personal computers, public and private databases, and the Web have significantly improved access to timely and authoritative information as well as to research and analyses relevant to policy issues. Yet, the Web opens a world of knowledge that can be both enlightening and overwhelming. This knowledge must be organized by librarians and information specialists in ways that are helpful to legislators. Experts in law, economics, natural resources, foreign affairs, and other disciplines can use the tools of ICT to bring their knowledge to bear on policy issues through a variety of approaches that range from gathering data from world-wide sources to building sophisticated economic and simulation models to aid in anticipating some of the potential impacts of new laws.

These tools can help ensure that lawmakers are better informed about what has been done before and about some of the possible outcomes of their decisions. Through its capacity to support communication with experts, wherever they may be located, ICT can significantly expand the scope of information, knowledge, and experience brought to bear on an issue. Nevertheless, ICT-based decision support tools can never replace the role of the elected representative in making challenging and often difficult choices.

To make this knowledge available, some parliaments use an internal network, or Intranet, which is not accessible to the public. This network can be used for a variety of important purposes, such as transmitting confidential requests for information, providing additional security for private e-mails, and managing working documents that are still being revised prior to release.

This knowledge management tool can be an important asset during periods of negotiation and political compromise.

Parliamentary Websites for the Public

A number of legislatures maintain tracking systems and websites that integrate the information generated by all of the systems described above. These websites provide access to the text and status of a bill, links to related documents, the history of committee and floor actions, and recorded votes on proposed measures. The vast majority of parliamentary websites also provide the history and a description of the operations of the legislature; information for visitors; lists of Members, committees, and officers along with ways to contact them; material for students and teachers; and other items of interest.

Members and their staff now routinely use parliamentary websites themselves to view or obtain copies of agendas, draft legislation, proposed amendments, debates, and votes. The importance of this function, which supports the daily work of legislatures, can sometimes be overlooked. However, it has become an integral and often essential tool that facilitates the efficient operation of the entire body.

Similarly many citizens, civil society organizations, the press, businesses, and other public and private organizations have come to rely on parliamentary sites to track proposed legislation and the activities of specific committees and Members. Some also find webcasting of committee and plenary sessions to be a valuable supplement to the printed report. The press and others who closely follow legislatures find that archives of web casts can be especially useful.

Some of these sites are also beginning to offer, or are experimenting with, methods for enabling the public to register their views on policy issues and proposed bills. These efforts are based on trends within the information society that foster user generated content and user forums.

A major challenge confronting parliaments is how to make the information they provide understandable to those outside the institution. The user's need may be for something as straightforward as "What is my representative's e-mail address" to something as complex as "What is the parliament doing to make sure we have a steady supply of natural gas?" The former request is relatively easy to satisfy; the latter is more complicated, and the criteria for satisfaction may vary with each user. In addition, legislative systems can be difficult to understand because they present information about procedures that can be obscure, even to those who use them. These procedures have evolved over many years to ensure efficiency and fairness in the legislative process, but as a consequence they may create a less transparent process in the eyes of some citizens.

Describing procedures clearly can present a particular challenge when they involve votes. In political systems in which the votes of individual Members are recorded, it can be difficult to know what a particular vote means, and therefore what a Member intended by voting yes or no. For example, a Member who is opposed to the expansion of nuclear power may vote in favour of a government study of the options for nuclear energy because approving a study may be a method for delaying the building of more plants.

The actual text of legislative proposals can be difficult to understand because they often are written using complex legal terms that modify existing laws. Therefore, they cannot be fully understood without reading the text being amended. In these instances, the fact that the text of a proposal is available on a timely basis is of limited benefit if it is not accompanied by an explanation that clarifies its meaning and provides some context for understanding its intent.

Finally, there is the fact that users vary greatly in their own knowledge of legislative processes and their ability to understand the texts of proposals. They may be Members, staff, party whips, academics, lobbyists, the press, representatives of civil society organizations, and of foreign governments, or simply citizens inquiring after their own interests. Building a legislative system that enables such diverse users to find useful information quickly and with confidence is a formidable task.

The ways in which parliaments address these challenges can have a significant impact on the transparency of their work and the development of an open and equitable information society. There is a risk that ICT can exacerbate the impact of the digital divide on the legislative process by providing sophisticated tools that can be used effectively only by those who already have the knowledge and means to influence public policy. If this occurs, then technology will serve to further disenfranchise the have-nots and likely augment the power of the haves.

At the same time, ICT tools can help to alleviate many of these problems. There are sources that explain or provide background material on proposed legislation that can be

linked directly to a bill on a legislative website. Many of these have been created with ICT tools and can be readily integrated with a variety of similar sources to provide the user with easy access to a more comprehensive picture of a bill. Achieving this requires a political and managerial decision to make the website more comprehensible, a technical design to make it possible, and the time of a web developer. Most important is a commitment by the parliament to make its website more understandable to the public.

Member Websites

As more citizens turn to the Web for information about the work of their governments, their legislatures, and their elected officials, they expect to find authoritative and understandable information, and, increasingly, to be able to communicate their own views on policy issues.

The websites of Members, therefore, have become a potentially important resource for the public. As is true for the websites of the legislature as a whole, Member websites face a number of challenges. There can be a tendency by some to use the website as an electronic newsletter which serves primarily as a political advertisement. Studies have indicated, however, that constituents want more focused information that informs them about policy issues and the Member's views and actions in addressing them. They also want information tailored to different needs of citizens with different levels of understanding of the legislative and policy making process.

These studies have shown that Member sites that meet these needs are seen as relevant and useful to citizens. In their efforts to be more understandable and focused on the needs of their constituents, they also ad-

vance the objectives of transparency, inclusiveness, and more equitable access. This can help to further the goal of a more informed and engaged electorate.

An interesting recent development on Member sites has been the use of the newest web technologies to communicate with constituents. Some representatives have begun to express their views through blogs or place video clips on services such as YouTube to present their ideas through new media. Several are also testing the value of web-based social networks, particularly some of those who are involved in election campaigns. These are exploratory efforts, but the resulting experiences should prove interesting and informative.

As technology makes legislators themselves more accessible, however, it can also pose significant challenges. Citizens expect to be able to use e-mail and other methods of electronic communication to express their views to their representatives, and many of them expect to engage their Members in a dialogue. Yet, the volume of e-mail can become overwhelming, especially when it is used in orchestrated campaigns to influence Members and committees. And as a result of being so ubiquitous, it risks losing its power to influence. This can result in a negative spiral that causes further disengagement of the electorate even at the very moment when some look to technology to help reinvigorate the political process. Methods for addressing a number of these concerns have been identified and are beginning to be evaluated and tested in research and development centres. The results of these efforts may very well improve the tools for communication between Members and citizens.

4. New developments and emerging trends

The most recent developments on the Web have brought new tools for creating and sharing information. Technical innovations, however, can have unanticipated consequences, and the hype that accompanies them can sometimes exceed their ultimate utility. The effective use of new technologies requires knowledge of their strengths and limits and an understanding of the most important needs of legislatures.

Interactive Technologies and Web 2.0

The newest web technologies encourage user generated content and participation. The Web is no longer just a vehicle for the passive receipt of information. In many areas, and especially in politics, it is becoming an important means for citizens to express their views and exchange ideas.

A number of parliaments and Members are using or testing methods to enable citizens to register their opinions on issues. This can take a variety of forms, such as electronic petitions, discussion forums, online polls, and blogs. While some believe that these technologies hold great promise for re-engaging people in the politic process, they have not been in use long enough to assess their true value. As they have been adopted by more parliaments, a number of issues have arisen.

One concern is the issue of how generally representative the comments received may be. In some online groups, many follow the discussion but do not contribute their own views. Conversely, discussions are sometimes dominated by a few who have strong opinions on an issue. This can pose a challenge to Members trying to understand the extent to which the views expressed reflect the larger constituency.

A similar concern relates to online polls. This technique for surveying opinion can be a convenient means for constituents to express themselves, but Members would need to be cautious in relying on the results because of the difficulty in ensuring a sound representative sample.

Forums intended for the exchange of ideas can sometimes lead to a hardening of positions. One outcome can be the formation of separate discussion groups in which all the participants share the same basic values, affording little opportunity for growth and a better understanding of other perspectives.

Finally, there is the issue of how well informed the participants in an online forum may be about the issue they are discussing. Some may know a great deal and see the forum as an opportunity to lobby for their view; others may be complete novices but may have formed an opinion on the basis of a small piece of information or on a comment or observation that supports an existing prejudice.

All of these concerns, however, have not discouraged the desire to test and employ these new means of creating more interaction between citizens and parliaments. This is the case in part because many have recognized the great value of enabling individuals to express their opinions directly to their representatives. The dramatic growth in the number of lobbying groups who regularly convey their preferences on pending legislation to Members and committees, may, in some cases, have the unexpected effect of making the voice of a single constituent more valued.

Based on the positive experiences of a number of parliaments, it is likely that citizen

participation in the political process and engagement with legislatures through the Web will continue to grow and be of increasing importance. The sustained level of interest among citizens and Members has led to major research initiatives to assess interactive technologies to determine how they can be improved to the benefit of all.

It must also be noted that with the increasing availability of legislative data, civil society organizations have already begun to make use of this information for their own purposes. A number have developed applications that go well beyond what parliaments and Members may wish to or are willing to undertake, such as tracking voting records on specific issues or combining records of campaign donations with other information about Members. Some of these uses are clearly too politically sensitive to be undertaken by parliaments. Others, however, involve things such as a more effective presentation of certain types of public information or the linkage of sites that provide political commentary. Some of these techniques may be worth considering for inclusion in parliamentary websites. In the interest of supporting the transparency of the legislature, parliaments may, at a minimum, wish to encourage the continued development of such sites by ensuring the availability of legislative documents in open standard formats so that they can be more efficiently incorporated into other systems.

Open Standards and Open Source Software

Proprietary systems and software will remain in operation for some time, but there is a strong movement toward the use of open standards and the sharing of open source software. This bodes well for the public sec-

tor and especially for legislatures without a long legacy of ICT use.

There is an important distinction between open standards and open source software. Open standards, especially for data, are overseen by international standards setting bodies and are widely accepted. Even many commercial vendors are supporting them in their products. Open source software depends on voluntary collaboration among a variety of individuals and organizations to contribute to its development and maintenance.

The open source approach can be particularly attractive to parliaments because it allows ICT departments to create software incrementally through individual efforts as well as through collaboration with others. With sufficient cooperation, the skills of technical staffs that are trained to use this type of software can be pooled to provide highly effective and useful products. While some public institutions are not yet prepared to rely on open source software, others see it as very reliable, cost-effective, and one of the best options for legislatures with limited resources for ICT.

Both open standards and open source software rely on the emerging trend of collaborative development.

Collaborative Development

Collaborative development of ICT can be difficult but highly effective when it can be achieved. The challenges are as often political and organizational as they are technical. One of the basic problems is that institutions may be cautious about investing in and accepting systems and software to support their most important functions if they are not developed and maintained under their

direct control. Some also claim that differences in procedures and practices among parliaments force them to develop their own customized applications of ICT. However, others point out that the basic activities of parliaments are more common than they are unique and that modern software is sufficiently flexible to accommodate a reasonable range of customization.

There is little doubt that the development of the applications needed to support parliaments, such as bill drafting, the publishing of committee documents, and preparing verbatim accounts of plenary debate can require substantial time and money. When these costs are multiplied by the number of parliaments who choose to develop each of these systems on their own, it is easy to see how expensive this can be when the costs of all the parliaments working independently are added up.

It can be difficult, however, to undertake collaborative work when one or more of the participating legislatures already have an ongoing group of applications that needs to be upgraded or replaced. This can be further complicated by differences in the underlying technical infrastructure if it is composed of proprietary hardware, software, and operating systems. Over the long-term, open standards and the open source approach to software has the potential to make this process less painful.

Collaborative development requires a long-term commitment. Cooperating parliaments must reach consensus on the objectives of the initial development project and they must also work together on the planning, scheduling, and completing of subsequent system improvements.

Collaboration can be organizationally challenging but financially beneficial. Given the long-term costs of building and maintaining systems, this approach can prove highly useful and cost-effective. It is an increasingly attractive option, especially with the latest tools that support cooperative projects.

The Mobile Legislator

ICT allow legislators to be more mobile. Cell phones, lightweight portable PCs, small hand held computers such as personal digital assistants and e-mail devices, coupled with the increasing ubiquity of the Web, enable Members to conduct their work from many locations and with many people. While this kind of mobility may create some challenges to traditional legislative processes (for example, should remote voting be permitted?) it opens a wide range of possibilities for Members and committees to be in touch with citizens and with each other and to conduct their work more effectively. Ongoing research efforts are examining the strengths and limitations of this use of ICT in parliaments.

Developments outside the National Parliament

It is worth noting the growing use of ICT by regional and local legislative bodies.

The ubiquity of the Web and the decreasing cost of hardware and software have enabled some regional and local legislative bodies to become successful and innovative users of ICT. A number have begun to develop creative ways of informing and engaging citizens on local issues. Others have been able to focus on a particular type of application that is important to them and to develop it in ways that merit consideration by other legislative bodies at whatever level.

The success of these efforts is likely to put additional pressure on national parliaments to adopt some of the same approaches in their use of ICT. Further impetus will come from newer Members of parliaments who have had positive experiences with new technologies at the local level.

5. The international impact of ICT in Parliaments

The use of ICT in parliaments has important external as well as internal implications. Parliaments gain significant visibility by having a presence on the Web and providing information about the work they undertake. In today's globally connected environment, parliaments risk being marginalized if they fail to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by ICT. While it is understandable that parliaments with limited resources may not be able to make major technology investments, having basic services like a parliamentary website can demonstrate that legislatures are major players in the information society.

Technology investments in parliaments can provide benefits beyond improving efficiency of operations and increasing transparency. Once a technological infrastructure is in place it can be leveraged to enable greater cooperation between parliaments. For example, white papers and information about laws and pending legislation can be exchanged with other legislative bodies so that all can learn from the experiences of others. ICT make it possible to have video-conferencing among Members and between Members and subject experts, virtual networks of staff, and common distance learning/training. Having access to such information and to such technologies significantly increases the capacity of staff and Members of Parliament to address

complex policy issues and develop effective legislative proposals.

6. Managing ICT in legislatures

ICT have become a strategic and vital resource for parliaments. The challenge is not only to apply new technologies to improve the traditional tasks performed by legislative bodies, but to use the full potential of ICT to take legislatures and their members into the twenty-first century. Exploiting the opportunities offered by ICT will enable parliaments to be active participants in the global information society and to reap the benefits that such participation makes possible. To realize these objectives, however, effective management and sustained support from parliamentary leaders are essential.

Vision, Management, and Resources

Effective management involves a number of critical components. First, there must be a vision on how ICT should be used to support the work of the parliament and a management mechanism for implementing that vision. The vision should lead to the formulation of a strategic plan that includes the most important goals and objectives. And both the vision and the plan must be supported by the key stakeholders within the parliament, including Members, chairs of committees, officials, and the Secretariat.

These groups must work together with an understanding of their interdependence and a respect for each other's responsibilities. Each needs the knowledge required to carry out its oversight and management functions. They must have the interest and commitment to see that the ICT programs and projects most appropriate to the work of the legislature are undertaken and successfully completed. And they need to be aware of the risks of pursuing

the latest trends in technology for their own sake while remaining open to new technologies that can enhance, and in some cases even transform the legislative process for the better. Once these key components are in place, the resources needed for the successful implementation of ICT can be deployed more efficiently and on a more cost effective basis. Resources are always limited, and strong management, operating with a clear vision and a realistic strategic plan, is pivotal for ensuring that whatever resources are available are allocated to the highest priority projects and that costs are controlled.

Centralized and Decentralized Models

In its earliest days, ICT are a novelty in legislative bodies. Their potential was not fully understood, and it often fell to interested Members or the Secretariat to undertake initiatives designed to improve basic operations. As the value of technology became apparent, more groups within the parliament lobbied for ICT resources. In the private sector, control of ICT continued upward within the organization, and it became a mission critical tool for many companies. In some legislative bodies control has followed a similar path to centralization; in others it has remained decentralized and shared among Members, committees, the Secretariat, and the office of the President. In bicameral legislatures this has often resulted in separate departments and systems for each chamber, each competing for resources.

The centralized and decentralized approaches are both viable models if they are well managed, if systems are designed to interoperate efficiently, and if there is cooperation between separate chambers. In a legislative body there is a significant degree of independence among its constituent com-

ponents. This can sometimes lead to inefficiencies, but it more closely mirrors the true nature of legislatures. The argument can be made, in fact, that legislatures are purposefully difficult to manage because their fundamental mode of operation is more suited to negotiation and compromise than top down control. This can create challenges in optimizing the use of technical resources. While recognizing that a centralized approach may not be viable in many legislative settings, it is important to develop effective mechanisms for cooperation among the key players in order to reduce redundancy of systems and staff.

A number of situations demand a greater degree of integrated control, regardless of whether a centralized or decentralized approach is used.

1. The implementation of parliament-wide standards. This is necessary for critical requirements such as establishing and maintaining security and ensuring that communication can take place within the parliament, between citizens and the parliament, and with other parliamentary bodies.
2. Implementing large scale systems that require a greater degree of centralized management. This can usually be addressed by placing the authority, responsibility, and resources under the control of the primary stakeholder, often the Secretary General.
3. Making parliaments more transparent to the public. This can be more difficult to address because there are many coequal stakeholders and there are likely to be more divergent ideas about how to make parliament more transparent.
4. Coordinating the dissemination of authoritative parliamentary documents and information about parliamentary actions. While ICT serve as the vehicle for distribut-

ing this information, ICT units must depend on the various responsible components within a legislature for providing the source material. Developing strong relationships among information providers and systems developers is essential.

Resolving Conflicts

Regardless of which model is used – centralized, decentralized, or a hybrid - effective management requires mechanisms for resolving conflicts. Political compromise – the most common approach in a legislative body – is not necessarily the best solution when deciding among ICT priorities and options. A variety of approaches are possible, but one of the keys to success is the willingness to make clear choices and distinctions that make good business sense rather than “splitting the difference” in ways that may make good political sense. The fundamental question to be addressed is: What is the best way to ensure a more effective and a more transparent parliament?

7. Conclusion

Parliaments in today's world have an unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the benefits of ICT to enhance their efficiency and their effectiveness in performing their constitutional functions. Seizing such an opportunity will also help them play a major role in shaping the information society of tomorrow. To do so requires the development of a vision and a plan for innovation and the application of ICT within the parliamentary setting and the effective management of its implementation. Yet, the active involvement of Members of Parliament, parliamentary officials and other concerned stakeholders will be essential for achieving these goals.

Opening addresses

Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Today is a rather unusual day for IPU. It is perhaps surprisingly rare for us to bring together members of parliament, Secretaries General and specialized parliamentary staff around a single topic. That it is possible today thanks in large part to the co-organizers of the conference, the United Nations and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

The Global Centre stands on two legs: parliamentary action to develop the information society at home; and the use of ICT in parliament. We are resolutely standing on that second leg today.

ICT is one of those topics where a dialogue between the technical specialists and the end-users is a fundamental condition of success. That dialogue is rarely easy, and it can often seem that everyone is speaking a different language. Nevertheless, that dialogue is essential.

I must say that I find it rather exciting to have such a wide range of participants, including ICT managers, librarians, legislative staff and communications officers. The dialogue will be fruitful if each of you are ready and willing to take the opportunity to share your experiences that is offered here today.

I am not a specialist in ICT. But I do know that a revolution is going on around us in terms of creating, sharing and accessing information, and I want to make sure that parliaments fit into that picture.

ICT is a fast-moving world. A considerable body of experience has been developed in parliaments over the last 30 or 40 years, and more particularly in the 10 or so years since the explosion of the Internet. What have we learnt collectively? Are we ready for the ICT chal-



lenges that parliaments will be facing tomorrow?

If we think about the major challenges to make effective use of ICT in parliament in some countries, one of them in fact has only little to do with ICT. It is the human resources available within parliaments - the people with the skills and knowledge that are needed to plan, build, manage and use ICT systems. It is important for ICT should be recognized as a core strategic activity of parliament, and to be appropriately resourced.

Another challenge is how to manage the expectations created by ICT, whether it is members of parliament that want to be able to access their documents from anywhere around the world, or a constituent that wants to know how their representative voted last night. Each group of users has their own set of needs, and their own expectations about how they should be met.

It should be said though that some expectations are eminently reasonable. That information about the status of draft legislation as it passes through parliament, and the final legislative document should be available to the people that it concerns, seems indisputable.

Few people would disagree that transparency and accessibility are two of the key objectives of a democratic parliament. ICT offer us an important means of achieving these objectives, and we should do everything in our power to seize these opportunities.

There are reasons for optimism. Technology can be duplicated and shared in a matter of seconds. The use of common standards and perhaps open source software creates huge opportunities for parliaments to pool their efforts and share their know-how, so that parliaments with the least developed ICT infrastructure may be able to rapidly access the latest technologies.

I wish you enjoyable and fruitful deliberations, and look forward to a day of rich and interactive discussion.

Thank you.

Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General
for Economic and Social Affairs
of the United Nations

Excellencies, distinguished members of Parliament,
Secretaries General, ladies and gentlemen,

My schedule prevents me from being with you in person
in Geneva. But I am delighted to join you by video for
the World E-Parliament Conference 2007.



One can no longer deny the transformative effects of the information revolution on our global society and its impact on governance systems. New technologies have helped to empower citizens and media to take part in public life. To increase the dialogue among State institutions and society at large. To assist countries in responding to international calls for standards of accountability, transparency, and participatory governance. And to encourage international exchanges and cooperation in many sectors.

The outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society show convergence in understandings on the use of ICT for development. It is now agreed that the promotion of ICT should not be treated as a goal in itself, or as a substitute for developing and modernizing institutions – executive, legislative or judiciary. Rather, promoting ICT should serve to complement and enhance those development efforts.

Yet, Parliaments have not taken full advantage of ICT to modernize their processes, foster public dialogue, and help shape the Information Society. More can be done here, particularly by encouraging collaborative efforts and exchange of experiences.

ICT can help to increase the quality of information available to MPs and parliamentary administrations. To improve citizens' access to parliamentary proceedings and public life. And to ensure full, effective participation in the global information network.

At the same time, through their legislative, representative and oversight functions, Parliaments can make the difference for the advancement of an inclusive and equitable information society. They can create space for political dialogue and consensus to give direction to national information society strategies and policies.

Parliaments should find strength around a global partnership to advance the interest of their citizens in this field. Well-equipped in ICT and well-informed, Parliaments can help build better societies and a better globalization.

With the launch of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union have expressed their commitment to partner together – and to

seek innovative ways to leverage the efforts of Parliaments and many other stakeholders in this area.

I hope that this partnering mechanism, and common framework of action, can be exploited to channel knowledge, experiences, best practices, and financial resources in a more coordinated and coherent way.

This Conference is benefiting from the support of the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments. It makes manifest the enormous opportunity available to step up UN cooperation with the IPU and Parliaments in the global struggle for fair, equitable, and inclusive development.

Thank you.

Anders Forsberg, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) and Secretary General of the Parliament of Sweden

Dear Friends,

Fifteen years ago, when I, as Director General of the Riksdag, received a report from a commission of inquiry on the computerization of the Riksdag's parliamentary documents I couldn't, in my wildest dreams, predict the rapid development we have seen since then. It was quite extraordinary that we, in the early 1990s – before the breakthrough of the Internet and e-mail – were going to be able to computerize our parliamentary documents in full-text and make them searchable and available for a broader public! Efforts to make these parliamentary documents more accessible with the help of computer-based solutions had been launched some 15 years before that.



Developments have taken place at breakneck speed. But it is not only in the field of ICT that we have witnessed such changes. Internationalization has taken giant steps forward during the same period. Today, for example, I have daily contact via e-mail with colleagues around the world in a completely different way than my predecessor in the post of Secretary General.

Another example is the way in which ICT and internationalization have meant that news can spread easily and rapidly across the world. In this age of globalization we, as citizens are able to follow, participate in and influence events all over the globe. ICT is most certainly a tool that has come to have a massive influence in these globalized times. And computerization goes hand in hand with internationalization.

Our conference today illustrates both these tracks of development when representatives from many countries meet here in Geneva to discuss ICT and its future development.

The vision we had in the Riksdag and in several other parliaments some ten-twenty years ago, to make our official parliamentary documents and information available to the public has, in many senses, been realized. A key goal in these efforts has been to make the work and decisions of parliament transparent to the public, and thus to create opportunities for greater understanding and dialogue on political developments. Freedom of expression and information have been crucial in this process.

The role of parliaments in a democracy is about this very thing. If we want to be part of a modern society we need to use all the available tools to open up our parliaments to the

public. There is only one way for democracies to go about this, and that is to work for greater openness and transparency. This can be done in many ways. With these days in Geneva, with an international workshop yesterday for parliamentary staff and officials, today's conference with MPs, parliamentary staff, officials and Secretaries General, and tomorrow's meeting of members of the Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament, we will all focus on various aspects of ICT. Two of these aspects are essential.

The first is the basic idea of using ICT to give the public free and full access to debates and other parliamentary activities. In working for this, we show our respect for the citizens' right to see for themselves what is going on inside parliament. This access is central to their opportunities to participate in a democratic political process. This puts us in a good position to improve the dialogue with citizens and enhance contacts between parliamentarians and the electorate.

The other aspect concerns the use of new technology to modernize parliamentary processes. During the initial stages of computerization, identifying the ways in which ICT could be used in parliaments was, in many respects, the main task on the agenda. Using new technology to achieve a more efficient decision-making process and administration and to improve service to members preceded the ideas about making the work of parliaments accessible to the public.

But both aspects of ICT are central. The four sessions of today will focus on these two important aspects. Before lunch we have two sessions on how ICT can be used to modernize and make parliament's most important functions and tasks more efficient.

The two sessions of this afternoon deal with parliamentary information systems. How can we build high-quality and sustainable information services? What lessons have been learnt in the use of parliamentary websites in the context of dialoguing with the electorate and civil society and enhancing interaction with citizens and the electorate?

At the same time, it is important to take into account the fact that developments have not come equally far all over the world. Not everyone has the same resources and opportunities for accessing new technology. Views on the rights of citizens to political influence and freedom of expression and to accessing information also vary between different political cultures. The conference we are holding today therefore constitutes an important forum for exchanging and sharing experiences with one another. It gives us an opportunity to debate the challenges and benefits provided by ICT. It can also serve to analyse successful approaches, and identify good practices and lessons learned.

I consider it particularly valuable that we can meet here in Geneva at a conference that unites parliamentarians, Secretaries General and parliamentary staff and officials who work with ICT, such as legislative staff, IT administrators, knowledge managers and librarians. For the ASGP and my fellow Secretaries General, it is important to be able to bring together parliamentarians and officials who work with ICT. This offers us an opportunity to combine

the various wishes and views that the people's elected representatives have about these issues with the competence and interest of our colleagues who work with these specific issues in parliament.

We Secretaries General have a specific commitment to maintain in our respective parliaments that is to make efforts to open the dialogue between our members and officials who work with ICT. At the Riksdag, ever since we started the computerization process, members have shown a considerable interest in getting involved in the issue of ICT development. This has taken place in various forums of expert and reference groups, where it has been possible to convey the members' views and wishes directly to the relevant officials working with ICT development. I believe that this has been the basis for the success we have had at home in these matters. As recently as a couple of weeks ago, I initiated a strategy seminar on ICT in the Riksdag, which will take place again in the near future with parliamentarians from each of the parties in parliament. One of the appointed members is present here today. We as officials want to know more about the parliamentarians' expectations in the field.

Finally, as a representative of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, I want to express our satisfaction with the cooperation with the United Nations, the IPU and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliaments.

We have every reason to look forward to valuable and interesting discussions here today.

Thank you.

Keynote address

by Stefano Rodotà, Professor of Law, University of Rome "La Sapienza"

The impact of information and communications technologies (ICTs) on parliamentary processes can be examined from different perspectives. On the one hand, one can consider the phase during which representative bodies are formed, hence the selection of candidates, election campaigns and voting processes. On the other, the attention can be focused on the internal organization of the parliamentary works and the different forms of interaction with citizens.

Although voting techniques and organizational arrangements are certainly important elements to be taken into account, they can be seen as part of an ongoing and natural adaptation to technological innovations and evolution, even when they raise relevant questions like in the case of the electronic distance voting, as its deployment may threaten the individual, free and confidential nature of the ballot.

The impact of technology is different instead when the combined and complex effect of innovation alters the citizens-parliaments relationship. The resulting changes, however, cannot be analysed using traditional tools, since today we are beyond the historical opposition between representative and direct democracy and citizens can make their voices heard in ways that were unthinkable in the past. In the Social Contract, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, criticizing representative democracy, wrote:

*"le peuple anglais pense être libre; il se trompe fort, il ne l'est que durant l'élection des membres du parlement ; sitôt qu'il sont élus, il est esclave, il n'est rien. Dans le court moment de sa liberté, l'usage qu'il en fait mérite bien qu'il le perd."*¹

His words may seem unduly pessimistic, or even unjust, but they essentially refer to a basic premise or evaluation of a political-institutional logic which took into serious consideration the post-electoral silence of citizens once elections were over. The 100 days immediately following an election have been in fact, and still are, referred to as the "honeymoon", a period during which even unpopular reforms can be introduced as the remaining term of the legislature should be sufficient for reabsorbing their negative repercussions. This approach, however, has been gradually eroded by the increasing use of opinion polls to rate the activities of the government and parliament, which in turn resulted in a changed relationship between institutions and public opinion that has also influenced the political agenda, especially over the long term.

The effects of this innovation have been amplified by the use of information and communications technologies, to such an extent that we now speak of "pollocracy", "permanent election campaign", and, sometimes, of "perpetual democracy". The ever broader range of opportunities made available by ICTs gives citizens the chance to intervene actively in

1. The people of England regards itself as free; but it is grossly mistaken, it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing. The use it makes of the short moments of liberty it enjoys shows indeed that it deserves to lose them.



several ways, break the silence between one election and the next, and rise above their former status of “election fodder”. We can see plenty of examples of this change, such as the increasing use of toll-free telephone numbers for so called legislative calls by citizens to MPs in which citizens demand their elected representatives to take a particular stance on a given law, or the various ways of using the Web to create grass-roots lobbies, form dynamic coalitions and organize demonstrations. All these forms of direct action influence government and parliament.

It is easier to appreciate the change that has taken place if we accept that we have now transcended the contrast between representative and direct democracy. The latter used to be seen as a net alternative to the former. Today’s dynamics are more complex and can generate different results: the integration of the traditional representative democracy with e-participation tools (this is the model envisaged in the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, which enshrines the principle of participatory democracy side by side with the principle of representative democracy - Articles I-46 and 47); or, the establishment of an entirely separate political sphere, mainly performing those representative functions that traditional institutions have allegedly lost, thereby losing their legitimacy and historical role. We can make a rough and ready distinction between the first model, in which new and interactive channels are formed between citizens and politicians or between civil society and representative bodies, and the second model, in which channels are conceived mainly, or exclusively, among citizens.

These changes necessitate an overhaul of the political system. What are in fact the effects of two systems of representation coexisting side by side, with one claiming to be the “true” embodiment of democracy on the grounds as the direct and diffuse expression of the current will of citizens?

Evidently, this question needs to be posed to historical institutions and, above all, to parliaments. Before venturing a response, however, it is important to give appropriate considerations to the trends and proposals occurred in the political system.

For example, Article I-47 of the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe, which deals with participatory democracy, states: “No less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of Member States may take the initiative of inviting the Commission,

within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Constitution.” Here the evident intention is to transfer to the European dimension, while clarifying its significance and scope, an already established institution, namely the popular legislative initiative.

Another example worth mentioning is the increasing use of primaries in Europe. The effect of this new practice is not just to involve citizens at an earlier phase of the political selection process, but also to remove the power of selection from the society’s traditional mediators, the political parties. In France, on the occasion of the primaries for the selection of the candidate to run for the Presidency of the Republic, the success of Ms. Segolène Royal can probably be ascribed also to the fact that, in the months preceding the vote, it was possible to become members of the French Socialist Party online. This gave 50,000 people a chance to make their opinions known, without the filtering effect of the party machine. Ms. Royal herself then proposed the creation of a “jury de citoyens”² composed of people drawn from electoral lists to carry out “une surveillance sur la façon dont les élus remplissent leur mandat.”³ In this way, the traditional relationship between elected representatives and voters would be profoundly changed as members of parliament would no longer be free from restrictions or constraints.

An even more radical hypothesis in this direction is the one that gives citizens the right “to recall the members or the US Congress” (a right accorded in different forms in 26 States of the USA), along with the further right “to veto any act of the Congress”.

In the framework of the *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluation of candidates’ political programs two cases can be recalled. Two US academics, James Fishkin and Bruce Ackerman, have proposed to introduce “deliberative polls”, involving a relevant sample of voters preceded by periods of information and collective discussions, as well as the introduction of a “deliberation day”, a remunerated national holiday dedicated to the discussion on candidates one week before elections. The aim was to make it possible for citizens to take an active part in the decision-making process by means of an informed debate, as opposed to responding passively and acritically to the traditional polls. On the other hand, during the previous campaign for the presidential primaries, the democrat candidate Howard Dean made considerable use of ICTs to promote greater citizen participation, new ways of fundraising and consultation with electors. Asked by Wired magazine how he would behave if one of his proposals turned out to be unpopular among voters, Mr. Dean answered quite frankly that he would change the proposal. This epitomizes one of the critical dimensions in the use of ICTs in the candidates’ selection process and in the setting of the political agenda. Do ICTs make it easier to listen to the opinions of the people or do they reduce the autonomy in policymaking by creating a new form of political passiveness, which would replace the traditional one through the transfer of it from citizens to politicians?

There are also different experiences of citizens’ direct involvement in the legislative process. It can be recalled that in 2001 Estonia introduced the project “E-democracy environment TOM and Public Participation in Estonia” to involve voters in parliamentary processes

2. Citizens’ jury

3. Oversight on how the elected carry out their mandat

through a procedure divided into six phases: submission of the idea or proposal; submission of comments; editing; voting in favour or against; signing; and, feedback from the government. Results were however modest, partly due to the attitude of the parliament, so that the emphasis was later shifted to a broader participation, through online consultations, in respect to strategic decisions or documents. In other countries, for example in the United Kingdom and in Hungary on bioethics, informal consultations were encouraged by inviting citizens to submit their opinions on proposed legislative changes.

These are all examples of major changes that are occurring in the relationship between citizens and institutions. The objection that some of the cases mentioned above did not involve ICTs is not really convincing. It is an incontrovertible fact that the increasing use of technology is causing complex contextual changes, and we are witnessing nothing less than a profound transformation of the public sphere and its relationship with the political process, whereby the technological dimension will progressively encompass the entire political arena.

So, what lessons learned should parliaments take into consideration? The basic and most obvious point of departure is the way in which the Internet is reshaping the public presence, both at the individual and collective level. We can discern a number of emerging dynamics, sometimes in contradiction with each other:

- we are experiencing the emergence of a mass self-communication, also characterized by the involvement of the “lay” citizen, but with the possible outcome of an atomized individual participation;
- a fragmentation and segmentation of the public sphere is also taking place;
- the opportunities for instant political mobilization have grown;
- we are witnessing the rise of “hypermedia campaigning”, which can translate into a situation of continuous campaigning;
- the functions and nature of political mediators are changing;
- the emergence of phenomena such as the blogosphere has enlarged and increased the tendency for self-representation;
- the culture of social networking is reinvented every day.

This is how the world around parliaments is changing. Parliaments must step into the fray with courage and farsightedness as they strive to cope with this complex and contradictory process. If parliaments want to be part of the reinvention of politics, which is occurring in any case, they have to be prepared to reinvent themselves.

Parliaments must begin by facing two issues. First, they must acknowledge that the crisis of representative democracy is their crisis. Secondly, they must recognize that the real antagonist of representative democracy is not direct democracy but populism.

It has been argued that electronic democracy is the most appropriate political form for the populism since ICT make it easier to appeal directly to citizens, bypassing all types of me-

diation, enfolding politics in a bottom-down logic frame, transforming elections into a form of investiture and transferring the need for representation away from the political system. In this way, however, the very concept of representation risks alteration, because it can transform itself in self-representation, it can appear in a myriad of places, raising the question of what is truly representative.

Parliaments must establish a dialogue with this segmented and fragmented society. But this implies to making some difficult choices and opening effective channels of communication. For example, the citizens' right of initiative, as envisaged in Article I-47 of the Treaty for Establishing a Constitution for Europe, could be generalized and made binding to some extent. Bills submitted by groups of citizens should be considered by the parliament, and arrangements should be made to enable the sponsors to participate in the legislative process. This would place a constraint on parliament that might well be considered excessive. Yet, the presence of manifest obligations on the part of parliament could persuade citizens that they have real power. This would eliminate what many polls have shown to be a chief source of popular disenchantment, which is that the many e-democracy and e-participation initiatives have yielded poor results. Parliament can thus be conceived as an open forum, in which citizens are able to take part in the legislative process by submitting proposals, observations and amendments.

If the objective is to open channels of communication, then the channels need to be viable, and parliaments must therefore ensure that they are open to all on equal terms. Parliaments need to put the problem of access to knowledge at the very top of their agenda. Access to knowledge means two things. In the first place, it refers to the availability of the necessary technical tools (free Internet access, ICT literacy), the bridging of the digital divide, the recognition of knowledge as a common good (revision of patent and copyright laws). By acting in this way, parliaments can forge the new citizenship.

Secondly, access to knowledge implies plurality of content. In the new "Republic.com" society, one of the defining characteristics of citizenship is the continuous exposure to a plurality of contents, which enables people to compare information and develop a critical thought. Parliaments' duty, therefore, is not simply to avoid censorship in all its forms, but also to prevent the establishment of situations of control over communication systems by actors able to reduce the available content while holding a monopoly or semi-monopoly over the market.

In the knowledge society, an increasingly important function of parliaments is to safeguard fundamental rights and freedoms in the vast public space that ICTs have created and are constantly reshaping. It is up to them to prevent our societies from becoming dominated by control and surveillance concerns and social discrimination, thus turning into "nations of suspects", on the grounds of a need for security, which all too often becomes a pretext for the creation of a "factory of fear". It is also up to parliaments to avoid that the market logic grants to citizens only those rights that are due to them as consumers. Although this has been an historical task for parliaments, today it takes a special significance: only if parliaments discharge their duty convincingly will citizens continue to regard them as necessary institutions. Parliaments must therefore learn how to build trust.

In the past year, in particular, the creation of trust and the legitimizing of players working to this end has been subsumed to a large extent by the business community. Microsoft started with the proposal of a digital identity card. It was followed by the joint initiative of Microsoft, Google, Yahoo! and Vodafone, who announced the publishing, by the end of the year, of a Charter for the protection of the freedom of expression on the Internet. In July, Microsoft presented its "Privacy Principles", and more recently, Google, having rejected a European Union proposal to block "dangerous" search terms ("bomb", "terrorism", "genocide" and the like), proposed the adoption of a global standard for privacy that would be supervised by a "Global Privacy Counsel" attached to the United Nations.

There is an emergent need to protect fundamental rights, especially those concerning the freedom of expression and the protection of personal data. Safeguarding these rights cannot be left to private parties, since they will tend to offer guarantees that suit their interests. Parliaments have an essential role to play in this field in terms of new cross-border collaboration, as they have to operate in a global dimension, by contributing to the establishment of a set of guarantees, such as those encapsulated in the concept of the "Internet Bill of Rights" to be discussed in the framework of the Internet Governance Forum of the United Nations in Rio de Janeiro.

Parliaments have many avenues open before them, but beyond identifying those which lead towards the best use of technologies in legislatures, they must also strive to find ways to avoid annihilation at the hands of the power of technology and the new social and institutional structures that this power is creating.

If they wish to remain the country's real measure for democracy, they must change.

Sessions proceedings

Leadership and Vision for ICT in Parliament

The successful implementation of ICT in parliament begins with committed leadership within the institution and a well articulated vision for how ICT can support the parliament in fulfilling its role in today's information society. The Chair of the first session of the conference, **Ms. Georgeta Ionescu**, Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of Romania, emphasized the importance of leadership and vision in her Chamber's creation of a website, online petitioning, and other tools designed to enhance public participation. These initiatives contributed to the designation of the Chamber of Deputies of Romania as the most trusted public institution by civil society.

Interventions by **Mr. Zingile A. Dingani**, Secretary General of the Parliament of South Africa and **Mr. Alessandro Palanza**, Deputy Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy reinforced the critical role of strong political leadership for ensuring that ICT serve the institution and its goals. Both stressed that political and executive management support are essential and provided examples from their respective parliaments. Their experiences highlighted the fact that leadership and vision are equally important whether the parliament is more recently established or has been in existence for many years.

Mr. Dingani stated that in the case of South Africa, developing an effective legislature that responds to the needs of its people re-

quired building an efficiently operating institution capable of legislating knowledgeably, performing oversight, and communicating with the public. He noted that ICT on its own cannot accomplish this, but with strong leadership and planning it can contribute significantly to achieving this goal. He reported that the Parliament of South Africa initiated a major strategic planning process to identify high priority projects, including building sufficient ICT technical capacity within the parliament and establishing a common platform for communications and information sharing. Extensive consultations with members of parliament and other users contributed to acquiring their full support and producing a plan that met their needs. Mr. Dingani emphasized that a critical success factor was the engagement of the political leadership with the ICT staff throughout the planning process. As a result, the Parliament of South Africa has streamlined its processes, added new capabilities for national distribution of high-quality audio and video throughout the country, greatly improved interaction with citizens, and enhanced collaboration. Equally important, it has now unified communications and a single source of authoritative information about parliamentary activities.

Mr. Palanza's presentation emphasized the close relationship between new ICT developments and parliament's role in producing a comprehensive legislative knowledge base that can add value to the parliamen-

tary process. To achieve this goal, the Italian Chamber of Deputies decided that it needed a new capacity for strategic planning and ICT management that cut across the entire institution and operated at the highest levels. As users have taken advantage of the new waves of technology to access information directly, especially through the Internet and the Web, the Chamber's leadership recognized the importance of establishing a unified Parliamentary Information System managed centrally by a high level ICT Strategic Group headed by the Secretary General. This group will prepare an annual strategic plan to be submitted to the President and Bureau of the Chamber of Deputies, thereby engaging the political leadership regularly in the process. Mr. Palanza emphasized that this unified approach also facilitates a coordinated effort to structure and tag individual parliamentary documents so that they can be organized and interconnected to create a Parliamentary Knowledge System. Most recently, the Italian Chamber of Deputies decided at the highest political level to migrate their systems to open source software.

While this new approach will entail many challenges, it also provides new opportunities for realizing the vision of a 21st century parliament, innovatively harnessing new technologies to benefit their society.

The open discussion provided an opportunity to explore various aspects of these issues. Questions raised, among others, included how to engage political leaders in the process of adopting ICT in parliament, the difficulty of changing mindsets and entrenched ways of operating, the specifics of adopting open source software, and how best to diminish the digital divide. In response, both Mr. Dingani and Mr. Palanza emphasized the role of senior officials and political leaders in being champions for adopting new technological approaches. This session accentuated the need for members of parliament to be engaged from the beginning of the process of implementing ICT in parliaments and remain committed supporters for innovation and change.



ICT in Parliament: Organizational Challenges

Transforming the vision for ICT in Parliament into reality involves significant organizational issues. Many speakers reiterated the statement that technology must be regarded as a means to serve parliament's goals and not an end in itself. Ensuring the best outcomes entails engaging all stakeholders in a way that builds consensus, establishes strong partnerships, and fosters organizational change. Sessions of both the International Workshop and the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 identified major organizational challenges and provided insights into approaches for meeting those challenges based upon experiences in various parliaments from around the world.

The chairs of two of the sessions set the framework by identifying some of the key challenges for converting the opportunities offered by ICT into positive results for parliaments. **Mr. Albert Kushti**, Secretary General of the Parliament of Albania, stated that organizational change is needed when large scale projects are implemented, parliaments try to become more transparent, and broader dissemination of parliamentary documents is undertaken. He noted that in Albania a long term ICT strategy and plan, which will be important for fostering needed organizational changes, are being developed. **Mr. Geoffrey Q.M. Doidge**, House Chairperson of the National Assembly of South Africa, focused on the impact that ICT has on parliamentary work and culture and the need to develop processes that facilitate making the right ICT choices and organizing content in a meaningful way. He relayed how the

experience in South Africa of undertaking a major transformation of technology in the parliament illustrates the critical need for strong political leadership combined with a strong technical ICT team and strong management by parliamentary officers.

Ms. Joan Miller, Director of Parliamentary ICT of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, provided an overview of their recent establishment of the enterprise-wide ICT organization that serves both the House of Lords and the House of Commons. To advise and oversee this consolidated ICT effort, a joint ICT management organization including members of both chambers, was created. The goal of the newly consolidated ICT organization is to attain best practices in the delivery, support, and exploitation of ICT in parliament for members and officials. She offered examples of the significant changes in process and organization required and spoke about the difficulty of initiating such change in an institution with a widely distributed and highly complex structure for handling parliamentary information. A parliamentary-wide ICT operation that serves both Chambers reduces duplication of systems, creates a single source of authoritative information, develops strong security, and rationalizes the existing array of basic systems. Other components of this initiative involve developing stronger IT technical capacity internally, establishing best practices and benchmarks for performance, and creating strategies for improving infrastructure and managing data. Ms. Miller illustrated an

organizational change cycle that involves a combination of committed leadership, effective management, and alignment of results with objectives. Achieving these objectives entails many organizational challenges, such as ensuring that a shared vision exists, establishing strong partnerships among the major stakeholders, convincing autonomous departments to relinquish control of their ICT activities, prioritizing competing demands, and accomplishing significant changes in operational practice.

The intervention by **Mr. Roberto Reale**, Adviser to the President of the Senate and Coordinator of the Institutional Strengthening Programme of the Senate of Argentina, reinforced the consensus on the positive impact that ICT can have in parliaments and how its application contributes to democratic governance. He emphasized the importance of understanding the culture and structure of institutions when applying technology. Argentina has undertaken a major Institutional Strengthening Plan to improve parliamentary and administrative management capacity to foster transparency. A key feature of this effort is the combined engagement of the President of the Senate, members, officers, coordinators, project leaders, and a consolidated ICT staff. Among the lessons learned in this process are the importance of the involvement and commitment of the political and administrative leadership, providing a broad policy framework, cooperating between public and international organizations, viewing ICT expenses as investments, enabling all citizens to publicly access legislative infor-

mation, engaging citizens, ensuring privacy and security, establishing responsibility for projects, and auditing and evaluating costs and benefits. By accomplishing these goals, Mr. Reale believes that e-parliament will become *u-parliament* (ubiquitous parliament), an institution capable of offering continuous services to all.

Remarks by **Mr. Enrico Seta**, Research and Study Department of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy, identified specific ways that organizational change can be fostered in the parliamentary environment. He noted that parliaments are not ideal environments for ICT innovation because of their complex legal and political traditions, but effective administrative and ICT staff can positively influence their attitude toward technology. In the case of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy the creation of a group of advocates for technology has been helpful for developing enthusiasm for ICT. He commented



that it is essential to translate ICT language into parliamentary language when speaking to members and top administrators in order to persuade them of the value of long-term investments in ICT. Focusing on the needs and culture of members, involving politicians with ICT experts, and designing parliamentary websites so that they are seen as the knowledge base of parliamentary activity contributes substantially to the successful implementation of ICT in parliament. Mr. Seta also emphasized the importance of maintaining a focus on the particular needs of parliament for ICT, rather than the larger world of technology developments.

Mr. Joao Viegas d'Abreu, ICT Director of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal and Chair of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) Working Group on ICT, presented an example of the importance of providing technologies that best meet the needs of the members and the challenges of adopting new systems in the parliamentary setting. He provided the results of a survey conducted by the ECPRD on the use of mobile technology in member states' parliaments. The ECPRD study found that more than 90% of the surveyed parliaments give high priority to supporting mobile technology for members, reflecting the increasing use of these technologies in society and the highly mobile environment in which members function. In 50% of those parliaments, the large majority of members use laptop computers, more than 80% offer remote access to legislative documents, and more than 90% have provided legislators with web mail. The survey also documented that some technologies and services are of less interest to members or are less relevant to parliamentary operations. For example, very few parliaments indicated that members used laptops during plenary sessions

and committee meetings or that there was a strong interest in providing remote electronic voting. These findings reinforce the notion that ICT need to be relevant to the culture and political environment of parliaments.

Interventions from Workshop and Conference participants covered an array of related topics including how to build and sustain political will, needs for training of both technical staff and members, and what might be considered a basic ICT capacity for a developing country. Speakers responded with suggestions about establishing parliamentary websites, providing core parliamentary information that provides transparency, and the importance of building strong cooperation between technical staff and parliamentarians. In a low-resource context, the first priority should be to ensure that legislation is available for public consultation online. Other issues focused on broadening public access to parliamentary information, including to persons with disabilities and those without access to computers. Speakers emphasized the importance of determining what type of information the public desires and proactively disseminating parliamentary information in formats that are easy for the public to understand.

This session demonstrated the value of having an organizational structure for ICT in parliaments that is responsive to the needs of the entire institution to enhance transparency and improve operational efficiency. Effecting such change in parliamentary bodies that tend to be bound by tradition can pose significant difficulties. Whatever organization is established must be viable within the context and culture of the parliament, must have strong support from the political leadership, and must serve the goals of the institution.

Open Standards and Collaborative Software in Parliamentary Information Systems

Several sessions of the International Workshop and the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 focused on the importance of open standards and collaborative software for building parliamentary information systems. These approaches contribute significantly to enabling effective integration of legislative documents and related materials, facilitating access to the growing storage of parliamentary information, and promoting collaboration among parliaments around the world. The emergence of open standards, such as XML, for document preparation and management offers substantial opportunities for creating a global resource of parliamentary information that links diverse sources and provides a basis for effective searching and sharing of parliamentary knowledge. Through collaboration the limited resources of individual parliaments can be leveraged and more equitable access to ICT capacity can be achieved. Speakers addressed both the opportunities afforded by open standards and collaborative software and the difficulties in implementing these approaches. Case studies of collaborative projects from different parts of the world

furthered an understanding of the benefits accrued and challenges encountered.

Session chairs provided an introduction to the topic of open standards and collaboration. **Ms. Claressa Surtees**, Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms of the House of Representatives of Australia, stated that in their experience interoperability has greatly facilitated such parliamentary operations as drafting bills and reports. She commented that parliamentary websites that integrate multiple sources of legislative information have become an essential tool and because of the resources required to support ICT developments, collaboration among parliaments is increasingly important. **Mr. Jeffrey C. Griffith**, Senior Adviser of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, reinforced the view that to realize the full benefits of ICT, legislative data and documents must be created using open standards and that despite the effort involved, the results will



be worth it. **Mr. Mincho Spassov**, Member of Parliament of the National Assembly of Bulgaria and President of the International Parliamentarians Association for Information Technology (IPAIT), noted that most of the early uses of ICT in parliaments was based on proprietary software, but there is a growing use of open source software and collaborative development, which involves challenges as well as opportunities.

The interventions by **Mr. João Luiz Pereira Marciano**, Adviser to the Head of the IT Department, of the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil and **Mr. Armando Roberto Cerchi Nascimento**, Senior ICT Adviser, Secretary of Information and Documentation of the Federal Senate of Brazil, offered examples of the strong partnerships established in creating the Brazilian legislative information systems. Mr. Marciano identified key relationships that were developed between the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, with other branches of the Federal Government, with non-governmental organizations, and with the civil society. The Parliament of Brazil uses open source software in its web portal, for its servers, and for workstations. It also applies XML standards to parliamentary documents. Mr. Marciano identified several challenges, such as the lack of open systems technical support, difficulty in convincing stakeholders to switch to open systems, the long learning curve involved, and path dependency. He said that the Brazilian Chamber has responded to these challenges by developing in-house capacity to support open systems, launching campaigns and events to build support, creating an education centre, and relying on standards for long-term sustainability of systems. Future plans include increasing ICT in support of e-democracy and interaction with the public.

Mr. Nascimento provided an in-depth look at the Interlegis system, which is designed to achieve integration and modernization in order to bridge the digital and political divide within Brazil. Interlegis provides a case study in large-scale collaboration and effective management of ICT innovation. The Legislative Modernization Program in Brazil was designed to promote the integration and modernization of Brazilian legislative bodies at the municipal, state, and federal levels. Stakeholders from all levels of government, including members of parliaments, are engaged in this enterprise. The project includes developing tools for education and training, communications outreach, and database development, as well for applying new technology. The first phase of the project has produced open and free software to support legislative processes, built technological infrastructure throughout the country, and documented best practices. As the program has evolved it has moved from basic e-legislative functions to fully integrated systems at all levels of government. The ultimate goal is the creation of a knowledge management capacity that can effectively harness the human, information, and ICT resources needed to support democratic governmental processes throughout the country. Mr. Nascimento concluded that the use of modern technology, applied in an open and collaborative way, effectively supports representative and participatory democracy in the 21st century.

In his intervention, Mr. Jeffrey Griffith, Senior Adviser of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, identified characteristics that are needed for high quality legislative information systems including accuracy, timeliness, completeness, clarity, and context. He emphasized that collaboration is a critical

element for success in building legislative information systems that meet these criteria since their components are highly interconnected. He acknowledged that collaboration within legislative bodies is often difficult because it can extend the time it takes to complete projects, involves dependence on others and may be difficult to sustain, but reiterated that its benefits are substantial. As a result, staff capacity can be increased and more intelligent systems developed. Collaboration needs to occur at several levels beginning with different stakeholders within a parliamentary chamber, then between chambers, and continuing with connections to the executive branch and civil society. He noted that cooperation among parliaments, at regional levels and globally, holds great promise for sharing information and experiences and collaborating on standards and guidelines and cited examples of collaborative efforts in Latin America, Africa, and the United States.

Cooperation on open standards was the main theme of the intervention by **Mr. Giovanni Sartor**, Professor of Legal Informatics and Legal Theory of the European University Institute. He discussed how ICT can contrib-

ute to preserving the role of parliaments in the information age by effectively supporting such functions as aligning legislation to its purposes, promoting critical analysis, engaging citizens, and coordinating legislation with other national and international sources. He stated that there is a huge amount of legislative information available on the Web today, but because it exists in different formats and is accessed via different search engines, it is not well integrated and cannot be effectively reprocessed to create new knowledge. The Semantic Web offers the potential to address this problem, but to do so legal documents must be “tagged” to identify their various components and attributes. Mr. Sartor added that since the Web has become the main source of legal documents in many countries there is a responsibility to apply open, non-proprietary data standards like XML so it can be accessed and used broadly to support democracy. Compliance with standards based on XML is critical for preparing, storing and preserving, processing and enriching, and communicating and sharing legal texts. Tagging documents enables automatic integration of legal texts and other structured information, development of legislation based on knowledge and dialogue,



7 Open Standards and Collaborative Software in Parliamentary Information Systems

long term preservation of legal sources, improvements in legal drafting, and greater dialogue among governmental institutions at all levels. Mr. Sartor emphasized that the use of open data standards ensures that these legal resources are accessible to all people and can be processed by all systems and devices.

Mr. Guenther Schefbeck, Head of the Parliamentary Documentation Department of the Parliament of Austria, reinforced views on the value of legislative data standards for fostering e-parliament. He stated that open standards are essential for ensuring transparency and long-term availability of parliamentary records. He offered a model approach for a legislative management system that was designed to support the Serbian Parliament based on practical experience from Austria. This system contains three core elements including a legislative editor, a workflow management system, and an open archive. This systematic approach

improves the quality of the legislative procedure, guarantees the authenticity of different versions of documents, and increases the global sharing of legislative information. All of these components utilize open standards that facilitate linking to a larger universe of documents and broader sharing of information. Mr. Schefbeck noted that while the complexity and uniqueness of legislative procedures impedes standardization, by using standard tools legislatures are actually able to achieve individual solutions customized to their situation.

The description of collaborative software development and standards application in African parliaments by **Mr. Flavio Zeni**, Chief Technical Adviser of the Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, provided further evidence of the importance of shared standards for legislative information systems. Mr. Zeni acknowl-



edged that while collaboration is good, it is generally not cheap or easy. However, because parliaments have similar needs and because ICT are an adaptable resource with low marginal cost of reproduction, it holds great potential for bridging the digital divide for African parliaments. The Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan is designed to strengthen the role of African parliaments in fostering democracy and good governance in Africa. He noted that while collaboration may offer benefits by producing synergy and reducing certain costs, the primary rationale for collaboration is to ensure the quality and sustainability of information systems for all parliaments. Two initiatives, AKOMA NTOSO, an XML-based open access infrastructure for parliamentary documents, and BUNGENI, a legislative information system using open source tools, are designed to fill the gap between the global promise of ICT and the operational reality of individual African parliaments. AKOMA NTOSO makes use of open data standards to create computer “understandable” documents that are high quality and can be broadly distributed because it defines common formats for parliamentary documents and enables data interchange and open access to these materials. BUNGENI uses the approach of collaborative software development for building common tools that are better, more sustainable, and available to all.

The discussion arising from interventions from participants focused on specific concerns associated with implementation of these approaches. For example, questions were asked relating to language, translation, and multi-lingual thesauri, as well as about how to acquire software developed by other parliaments for their own use. Several participants focused on mechanisms for fostering



collaboration among legislative staff, with parliamentarians, and at a regional level.

These sessions provided both a theoretical and practical foundation for fostering greater use of open standards and collaborative software development in parliamentary information systems. The application of open data standards to legislative documents enables the creation of a growing parliamentary knowledge base that can be utilized by legislative bodies around the world. The ability to link related parliamentary resources, search across a wide array of source materials from different countries, and create a long-term archive of legislative information improves decision making and increases transparency. Collaborative software development leverages the technical capacity of individual countries and allows more parliaments to adopt ICT to support their operations. These approaches are not necessarily easy to implement and can entail substantial time and resource commitments to achieve the desired goals, but consensus existed that such investments have the potential to result in positive benefits for all.

Enhancing Dialogue between Citizens and Parliaments through ICT

The impetus for using interactive technologies to enhance dialogue between citizens and parliaments comes from several directions. As people increasingly use the Web for all aspects of social and business interaction, they expect to be able to connect with elected officials and government institutions electronically. At the same time, members of parliament see that ICT enables them to disseminate information more widely to the public and to build stronger connections between citizens and their elected representatives. Through ICT, many see the potential to reengage citizens with their parliaments and to make government more transparent and responsive. While much enthusiasm exists for using ICT to accomplish these goals, challenges remain in terms of which technologies work best, how to capitalize on the positive aspects of interactive technologies while managing information overload or possible abuse of the systems, and how to use ICT in ways that engage citizens while retaining the representative role of parliaments.

Chairs of sessions on this topic at the International Workshop and the World e-Parliament Conference 2007 highlighted some of the major issues associated with using ICT to improve dialogue with citizens from the perspective of members of parliament. **Hon. Joseph Owona Kono**, Member of the National Assembly of Cameroon stated that he sees sustained levels of interest in parliaments for improving interaction with citizens. Although doing so is not without problems, it is impor-

tant to pursue it because of the value it will have for enhancing democratic institutions. **Hon. Eliza Roszkowska Öberg**, Member of the Committee on Transport and Communications of the Parliament of Sweden stated that the use of the Internet for interacting with government and the promotion of universal access to ICT, including for persons with disabilities, are greatly fostered in Sweden. She noted that through the official parliament website, e-mail, and other technologies, members are connected with the electorate. She also commented on some of the challenges, such as expectations of constituents, e-mail overload, and IT security that need to be tackled. In Sweden ICT have had a significantly positive impact on the way legislators are able to perform their work, but there are still ongoing needs to identify which technologies work best.

Interventions by session speakers addressed the above issues in the context of research that has been conducted on e-democracy and specific examples from different countries. All agreed that technology is merely a tool and more needs to be done to develop better technological approaches that will both engage citizens actively and result in more productive interaction with parliamentarians. **Mr. Uwe Serdult**, Managing Director of the Research Centre on Direct Democracy of the University of Geneva, noted that e-democracy can result in greater transparency, greater citizen participation in the political process, and enhanced deliberation through more dialogue with members. He proposed that the bar

needs to be raised on the kinds of tools available so that information can be more effectively integrated and easier for people to analyse. Such meta-tools will help draw people, normally not involved, into the political process. Performing evaluations on e-democracy tools and their effectiveness also would advance their deployment.

Mr. Thomas Buchsbaum, Chair of the Ad hoc Committee on e-Democracy of the Council of Europe, reinforced the observation that technologies for supporting e-democracy easy to use, yet adaptable to meet the needs of different stakeholders. He defined e-democracy broadly to encompass the support and enhancement of democracy, as well as democratic processes and institutions linked to the re-engagement of citizens in democracy and governance. Noting that e-democracy is an enabler for increased citizen participation, broader political debate, and better political decisions, he also identified some of the associated dangers such as spam, misinformation, and unmet expectations. Mr. Buchsbaum identified some of the legal challenges in establishing a framework for e-democracy including the need for clear definitions, and for establishing the scope of regulatory frameworks. He stressed that the Council of Europe has undertaken a comprehensive initiative in e-democracy resulting in a number of documents being issued on the topic that could help to set standards in the information society.

The intervention by **Mr. Ross Ferguson**, Director of e-Democracy of the Hansard Society, called for innovative use of ICT in parliaments to realize the principles of e-democracy and to help reverse trends in public dis-



satisfaction with elected representatives and poor participation in elections. Research conducted by the Hansard Society documented multiple case studies involving citizen online engagement with government. The research showed that while most study participants had previously had little interaction with the policymaking process, once given the chance to connect online they were interested in doing so. Furthermore, it indicated that they would engage with government online in the future and would recommend it to others. Such a reaction demonstrates the potential to translate passive citizens into active citizens through effective use of ICT. Mr. Ferguson noted that while parliaments have used ICT for administrative purposes, distributing information, and facilitating interaction with citizens, they have not pursued the use of ICT in a coherent, strategic fashion needed to create significant change. He maintained that if parliaments are to continue to play a pivotal role in representative democracies, they need to use ICT to have more effective multi-directional communication with citizens and invite public interaction with the parliamentary process.

Mr. Vasilis Koulolias, Executive Director of Gov2u, offered further research on new technologies to support parliaments. The eRepresentative project supported by the European Commission aims to address the challenges of elected assemblies for a mobile, secure, user-friendly, and personalized ICT environment. The project has a pan-European approach to enabling better inter- and intra-parliamentary communica-

tion and is designed to involve assemblies at the local, regional, and national levels. Mr. Koulolias described the characteristics of the eRepresentative desktop under development that would allow legislators to easily participate remotely in the activities of the assembly; facilitate secure, seamless access to parliamentary systems; and help to deal with data overload problems. The goal is to provide technology that supports anytime, any place participation, enables secure collaboration with peers as well as constituents, and provides personalized data retrieval. Using such technology Members would be able to spend more time in their constituencies, interacting with citizens and civil society, while also continuing to fully participate in the activities occurring in parliament. However, in order for these approaches to be adopted, members, parliamentary officials and committees would all have to be fully committed to its success.

The difficulties of moving from research to effective implementation were highlighted by **Mr. Ivar Tallo**, Senior Programme Officer of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). He noted that while there have been some successes in e-government, it takes time to achieve the intended goals. For example, in Estonia it took only seven years to get 80% of the citizens to submit their tax declarations online. He cautioned that e-parliament requires more than establishing a website or using PCs. Increasing transparency in parliament is a necessary precondition and must be done in concert with the building of the information society in general. Active engagement of most members is also critical to success. However, if done well the use of interactive technologies can result in better decision-making and communication with citizens. He recommended that in order to

overcome the conservative approach of most people to new technology, advocates for ICT in parliament need to raise awareness, provide training, and allow adequate time for new technologies to be implemented.

Discussion of these topics highlighted several issues. Questions were raised about the digital divide and how to foster greater public engagement with parliament. Presenters recommended educational campaigns and providing contextual information to make parliamentary material easier to understand. Providing feedback to citizens who participate in online interactions with parliament also will help sustain interest. Participants also raised concerns that direct online participation might lead to abuses and might bypass the representative process. Speakers commented that e-democracy if properly implemented should reinforce rather than erode representation. By providing a range of opportunities for people to engage with parliament, a greater diversity of people will likely do so.

These sessions offered support both for the goal of improving interactions with citizens and the practical development of better ICT tools to foster enhanced communication. Through innovative use of ICT for communicating with and engaging the public, parliamentarians can strengthen their unique relationship with citizens as their elected representatives. However, employing new interactive technologies in a parliamentary setting presents numerous challenges from cultural, institutional, political, and technical perspectives. As more experience is gained and assessments made, the more successful approaches for effectively engaging the public with parliament will emerge and should be broadly shared.

Network of IT Officials of Latin American Parliaments

The Meeting of IT Officials of Latin American Parliaments provided an opportunity for a regional focus on cooperative activities designed to support ICT in parliaments. The meeting strengthened the existing collaboration among the participants and helped identify ways they could broaden their cooperation through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. Opening remarks by **Gherardo Casini**, Executive Coordinator of the Global Centre and **Guillermo Castillo**, IT Specialist, Division of Science and Technology of the Inter-American Development Bank reinforced the objective of supporting existing regional alliances, while also extending their reach globally.

Mr. Castillo provided the background on the initial collaboration among parliaments in Latin America in support of the Global Legal Information Network and identified some of the objectives of the Inter-American Development Bank's programme supporting technical cooperation for ICT in Latin American parliaments. He emphasized the need for the group to create a workplan, finalize collaborative work on regional ICT conceptual studies, develop training documents, create a clearinghouse of ICT applications and best practices, strengthen the Latin American section of the Global Centre portal, and get all Latin American ICT officials to participate in the Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament.

One of the group's initiatives is an assessment of websites in parliaments in Latin American countries. **Ms. Ninoska López** of

the National Assembly of Nicaragua, **Mr. Miguel Alvares**, Website Coordinator of the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala, and **Mr. Erick Landaverde** of the National Assembly of El Salvador, gave presentations on specific components of the research effort to date. The assessment used the guidelines for parliamentary websites developed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2000, which identify the degree to which parliaments provide basic information about their activities, electoral systems, legislative procedures, and chamber organization, as well as links to other resources. Websites also were evaluated to determine the extent of e-government applications. While most of the Latin American parliaments provided online information to citizens, few had interactive capabilities. The assessment provides preliminary indicators, but all concurred that more in-depth analysis should be carried out. Representatives of each parliament agreed to perform an in-depth assessment of their own website, as well as one other parliament. **Mr. Jeffrey Griffith**, Senior Adviser of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, commented that such assessment efforts are extremely valuable and lead to improvements in websites. He suggested that it might be helpful to update the IPU website standards to take into account developments in recent years. He also urged that more emphasis be placed on usability studies.

Mr. Eduardo A. Ghuisolfi, Legislative Research of the Senate of Uruguay, reported on another study concerned with the use of e-mail and other remote access technolo-

gies. Establishing strong security and maintaining continuity of service are particularly important for these tools. He identified the need to develop a strategic plan, evaluate what works best in the legislative setting, taking into account the increasing mobility of legislators, and produce a system that can be constantly improved. **Mr. João Viegas d'Abreu**, ICT Director of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal and Chair of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) Working Group on ICT, commented that most European parliaments are increasingly concerned with providing remote access for their members since it can reduce the time gap to receive information and can help increase transparency. He advocated to promoting greater exchange of knowledge on these topics between the network of Latin American IT Experts and the ECPRD Working Group on ICT.

Presentations by **Mr. Fabio Vitali**, Professor of Informatics of the University of Bologna, and **Mr. Flavio Zeni**, Chief Technical Adviser of the Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan of UNDESA, illustrated the value of collaboration on common standards for building regional capacity in ICT. Mr. Vitali spoke to the advantages of XML for representing parliamentary documents since they have well-defined structures. While acknowledging that the effort to convert documents to XML is not easy or fast, he emphasized the value of open data formats because they are viable for the long term, are independent application, allow for local customization, and permit multiple uses, translation, and various options for consolidating and analyzing the data. He advocated that whatever standards are adopted, they should be globally interoperable so that countries can share

knowledge, experience, and training.

Mr. Zeni focused on how to reduce the digital divide among parliaments through the adoption of open standards and open source software. His experience with a collaborative open source development model in Africa, BUNGENI, demonstrates the value of creating sustainable software tools that can be used by all parliaments. This approach will deliver high quality systems for African parliaments while also supporting the harmonization of African legislation.

The intervention by the President of the House of Deputies of Uruguay, **Dr. Enrique Pintado**, reflected the importance of strong political support for implementing ICT in parliaments. He stated that effective information management tools are critical for exchanging ideas and addressing problems at an international level and ensuring that members of parliament make the best possible decisions. He urged IT professionals to persuade those at the political level that technology will be helpful rather than something to be feared. Technology can help legislatures exercise their independent role in society and thereby advance democracy and serve citizens.

The participants discussed different models of cooperation that would strengthen their regional network. They agreed that a core group of representatives from the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, the Inter-American Development Bank, and each regional area (Chile, Guatemala, and Brazil) would serve as the coordinating body. The group identified several topics, including computer security, archiving of digital documents, and updating the IPU 2000 website guidelines as candidates for papers and discussed ways to maintain communica-



tion among the members. It was agreed that virtual distance IT training opportunities in areas like usability, XML, open source platforms, and accessibility for disabled persons would be very helpful.

Presentations by **Ms. Ludovica Cavallari** and **Mr. Avinash Bikha** of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament described mechanisms provided by the Global Centre that help to foster the kind of regional collaboration exemplified by this meeting. Ms. Cavallari described the regional section of the Global Centre's portal which can increase visibility for the ICT activities undertaken in Latin America. She also showed the array of resources available on the website that can contribute to the initiatives of the Latin American network. Mr. Bikha explained how the online Global Network of IT Experts functions and showed how its features could be used to foster an exchange of information within their region and on a global level.

Closing remarks by **Ms. Nicoletta Piccirillo**, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of

Italy to the United Nations, reiterated the importance of bringing together IT experts from throughout Latin America to meet with experts from the Global Centre, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the academia. She noted the value of such dialogue for generating mutual understanding and sharing knowledge. She also stressed that within Latin American information technology is viewed as a supporting tool for advancing the Regional Agenda on integration and coordination of national policies and programmes.

The Meeting of the Network of IT Officials in Latin American Parliaments enabled representatives from across the region to participate in discussions on ways to strengthen their alliance. The participants advanced this effort by agreeing on a long-term workplan, sharing results of regional assessments of parliamentary websites and use of mobile technology, committing to continued evaluation of ICT applications within their parliaments, and establishing additional methods for collaborating regionally and globally.

Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament

The meeting of the Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament offered an opportunity for participants to establish the governance and operating procedures for the Network. Currently, there are more than 100 participants in the Network, over half of whom participated in the meeting. The goal is to have 300-400 experts involved. The group was charged with articulating the objectives of the Network, proposed membership, and modalities of interaction.

It was agreed that the mission of the Network is to strengthen parliaments by facilitating the exchange of information, experience, and best practices among experts in the use of ICT in parliaments. Its objective is to provide an international platform to foster collaboration and capacity building in the development of ICT in parliaments. The Network provides a public space for IT experts and their colleagues to discuss subjects of mutual interest. This Network is unique in that it is not concerned with IT per se, but rather with its particular application in the legislative setting.

The issue of membership generated substantial discussion. Participants agreed that as the Network is of technical nature, its function should prevail over political implications, and therefore membership should be available to any IT expert in any parliament. The definition of IT expert includes not only technical staff, but also other parliamentary experts such as members, legislative staff and librarian. A second category of Associate Membership would be avail-

able to international organizations working on ICT in parliament, academics who have relevant expertise, and non-governmental organizations involved with ICT.

Because of common issues, approaches and languages, it is likely that regions will establish subgroups within the overall network. However, all agreed on the importance of ensuring that all parliaments can participate in any discussion and that topical discussion groups be established in which all network members would be encouraged to participate. Candidate topics for moderated discussion forums were nominated, discussed, and voted on. The top three topics for which discussion groups have been established are:

- Open Standards: naming conventions & documentation
- Open Source and collaborative software development
- Parliamentary Websites

New topical discussion groups will be established per agreement of the membership. The Network will be operated by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. In addition to participating in discussion forums, members may submit specific inquiries to the network concerning any aspect of ICT in parliament. It was decided that automatic notification capabilities be established within the network so that participants can be alerted about new information posted on topics of interest to them.

Conclusions and recommendations

The World e-Parliament Conference 2007 and its related meetings brought together for the first time members of parliament, Secretaries General, IT professionals, and other parliamentary staff from around the world to address the promises and challenges of ICT in parliament. Speakers and participants shared insights based on experiences in their respective countries and regions and demonstrated the value of an ongoing global exchange to promote the benefits of ICT for parliaments everywhere. This confluence of key stakeholders offered a unique opportunity to identify emerging innovative trends, barriers to effective implementation, and good practices.

Major conclusions and recommendations included the following:

1. Through the effective deployment of ICT, parliaments have an opportunity to transform their institutions to ensure that democratic traditions are enhanced in the 21st century. If they fail to adapt, parliaments risk becoming marginalized in the global information society.
2. Successful implementation of ICT in parliaments requires the ongoing engagement of legislators. Members must be convinced of the value of ICT for producing sound legislation, enhancing the efficiency of operations, increasing transparency, and improving their ability to interact with citizens. Members need to contribute to the vision for ICT in parliament, provide oversight, and ensure continued support at the highest levels. IT experts must recognize the specific needs and characteristics of their legislatures and establish trust with members so that goals and priorities are commonly established.
3. Overall management of the innovation process within parliaments involves establishing a vision, initiating strategic planning, identifying risks, and developing strategies for promoting positive change. Strong management by Secretaries General and other senior legislative officers is crucial for allocating resources appropriately, sustaining ICT projects over the long term, and ensuring that projects meet their goals.
4. Investment in training is needed at all levels. With well-trained technical staff technology can be implemented in a cost-effective manner and new innovations can be identified. Members also need training so that they can effectively utilize technologies available to them.
5. Collaboration at all levels is a critical factor for success. Internally, within the parliament, collaboration among different departments - including IT specialists, legislative staff, research officers and librarians - and major operating units is essential to achieving positive results. Collaboration between chambers reduces redundancy and improves access to information. At the regional level, collaboration offers unique opportunities to share resources and establish common approaches. Global collaboration enables the sharing of good practices and facilitates assistance to parliaments in countries with fewer resources.
6. Adoption of internationally recognized open data standards offers great po-

tential for sharing legislative information globally, searching it more effectively, using it in new and innovative ways and a maintaining a permanent, authoritative electronic record of parliamentary actions.

7. Reducing the digital divide for parliaments in developing countries should receive high priority from parliaments in developed countries and international organizations. Opportunities for sharing good practices, increasing remote access to parliamentary information globally, and providing training should be actively pursued. Collaborative software development using open source software provides another opportunity for leveraging limited resources to build legislative information systems in countries lacking financial and technical resources, while maintaining high quality and sustainability.

8. ICT offer new opportunities to enhance the dialogue between citizens and their elected officials and to engage civil society more productively with parliament. Selecting and implementing the best technologies for accomplishing this goal remains a challenge and more needs to be done to evaluate which approaches are most effective. Successful engagement of the public should help to rebuild public trust in parliament and strengthen representative government.

Picture references

- p. 2 Opening of the Conference
- p. 7 **Jeffrey C. Griffith**, Senior Adviser of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament
- p. 17 **Anders Johnsson**, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
- p. 19 **Sha Zukang**, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations
- p. 21 **Anders Forsberg**, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) and Secretary General of the Parliament of Sweden
- p. 25 **Stefano Rodotà**, Professor of Law, University of Rome “La Sapienza”
- p. 31 From left to right:
 - Zingile A. Dingani**, Secretary General of the Parliament of South Africa
 - Georgeta Ionescu**, Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of Romania
 - Andy Richardson**, Information Specialist of the Division for the Promotion of Democracy of the IPU
 - Alessandro Palanza**, Deputy Secretary General of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy
 - Enrico Seta**, Research and Study Department of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy
- p. 33 From left to right:
 - Albert Kushti**, Secretary General of the Parliament of Albania
 - Andy Richardson**, Information Specialist of the Division for the Promotion of Democracy of the IPU
 - Roberto Reale**, Adviser to the President of the Senate and Coordinator of the Institutional Strengthening Programme of the Senate of Argentina
- p. 35 Opening of the Workshop
- p. 37 From left to right:
 - Giovanni Sartor**, Professor of Legal Informatics and Legal Theory of the European University Institute
 - Jeffrey C. Griffith**, Senior Adviser of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament
 - Guenther Schefbeck**, Head of the Parliamentary Documentation Department of the Parliament of Austria
- p. 38 From left to right:
 - Pietro Sebastiani**, Diplomatic Adviser to the President of the IPU
 - Enrico Seta**, Research and Study Department of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy
 - Geoffrey Q.M. Doidge**, House Chairperson of the National Assembly of South Africa
 - Pier Ferdinando Casini**, President of the IPU
 - Gherardo Casini**, Executive Coordinator of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament
 - Joao Viegas d’Abreu**, ICT Director of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal and Chair of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) Working Group on ICT
- p. 39 **Flavio Zeni**, Chief Technical Adviser of the Africa i-Parliament Action Plan of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- p. 41 From left to right:
 - Ivar Tallo**, Senior Programme Officer of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
 - Eliza Roszkowska Öberg**, Member of the Committee on Transport and Communications of the Parliament of Sweden
 - Ross Ferguson**, Director of e-Democracy of the Hansard Society
 - Vasilis Koulolias**, Executive Director of Gov2u
- p. 45 Network of IT Officials of Latin American Parliaments



Agenda of the Regional Workshop

Towards a Network of IT Officials of Latin American Parliaments "RED-FTiP Américas"

9 October 2007 – Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
Chemin du Pommier 5 – Geneva, Switzerland

- 08:30 - 09:00 Registration
09:00 - 09:30 Welcoming remarks
- 09:30 - 10:00 **Presentation of the Global Centre**
Gherardo Casini, Executive Coordinator of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament
- 10:00 - 10:30 **Presentation of the "RED-FTiP Américas" Programme**
Guillermo Castillo, Technology Specialist, Division of Science and Technology, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
- 10:30 - 11:00 Coffee break
- 11:00 - 12:00 **Session 1: Compliance of Parliamentary Websites with the IPU Guidelines and New Challenges**

Working Group Panel
Moderator - **Guillermo Castillo**, Technology Specialist, IDB
Interventions: **Jeff Griffith**, Senior Adviser, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament
- 12:00 - 13:00 **Session 2: E-Mail and Technologies for Mobile Offices**

Working Group Panel
Moderator - **Guillermo Castillo**, Technology Specialist, Division of Science and Technology, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
Interventions: **João Viegas d'Abreu**, Director ICT, Assembly of the Republic of Portugal
- 13:00 - 14:30 Lunch break

Agenda of the Regional Workshop

Towards a Network of IT Officials of Latin American Parliaments "RED-FTiP Américas"

9 October 2007 – Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
Chemin du Pommier 5 – Geneva, Switzerland

- 14:30 -15:00 ***Management of Legislative Information in Parliaments – New Frontiers***
Fabio Vitali, Professor of Informatics, University of Bologna
- 15:00 - 15:30 ***The Importance of Inter-Parliamentary Collaboration in the Development of Technological Applications for Parliaments***
Flavio Zeni, Chief Technical Adviser, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- 15:30 - 16:00 Coffee break
- 16:00 - 16:30 ***The Clearing house Function of the Global Centre, its Portal and the Decentralization of Contents***
Ludovica Cavallari and **Avinash Bikha**, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament
- 16:30 - 18:00 ***Open Discussion - RED-Ftip Technical Cooperation Programme***
Moderator - **Guillermo Castillo**, Technology Specialist, Division of Science and Technology, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
- 18:00 Closing remarks

Agenda of the International Workshop

e-Parliament: managing innovation

10 October 2007 - International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

08.30 am - 09.00 am	Registration
09.00 am - 09.30 am	Welcoming remarks Gherardo Casini , Executive Coordinator, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament
09:30 am - 11.00 am	Session 1 - Managing knowledge and innovation in Parliament Chair: Geoffrey Q.M. Doidge , House Chairperson: Committees, National Assembly of South Africa Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jão Viegas d'Abreu, Director ICT, Assembly of the Republic of Portugal and Chair of the ECPRD Working Group on ICT • Enrico Seta, Research and Study Department, Chamber of Deputies of Italy Open discussion
11.00 am - 11:30 am	Coffee break
11.30 am - 01.00 pm	Session 2 - Using open standards to share knowledge and information Chair: Jeff Griffith , Senior Adviser, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giovanni Sartor, Professor of Legal Informatics and Legal Theory, European University Institute • Günther Schebeck, Head of the Parliamentary Documentation Department, Parliament of Austria Open discussion
01.00 pm - 02:30 pm	Lunch break

Agenda of the International Workshop
e-Parliament: managing innovation

10 October 2007 - International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- 02.30 pm - 04.00 pm **Session 3 - Collaborative software and content development**
Chair: **Mincho Spassov**, Member of Parliament, National Assembly of Bulgaria and President of IPAIT
- Presentations:**
- **Armando Roberto Cerchi Nascimento**, Senior ICT Adviser, Secretary of Information and Documentation, Federal Senate of Brazil
 - **Flavio Zeni**, Chief Technical Adviser, Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- Open discussion**
- 04.00 pm - 04:30 pm Coffee break
- 04.30 pm - 06.00 pm **Session 4 - Are legislators and citizens ready for new technologies?**
Chair: **Eliza Roszkowska Öberg**, Member of the Committee on Transport and Communications, Parliament of Sweden
- Presentations:**
- **Vasilis Koulolias**, Executive Director, Gov2U
 - **Ivar Tallo**, Senior Programme Officer, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
 - **Ross Ferguson**, Director of e-Democracy, Hansard Society
- Open discussion**
- 06.00 pm - 06.15 pm **Closing remarks**
Gherardo Casini, Executive Coordinator of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament



Inter-Parliamentary Union



United Nations

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Association of Secretaries
General of Parliaments

Agenda

World e-Parliament Conference 2007

11 October 2007 - Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG)

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|---------------------|--|
| 08.30 am - 09.00 am | Registration |
| 09.00 am - 10.00 am | <p>Opening Addresses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union • Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations • Anders Forsberg, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments and Secretary General of the Parliament of Sweden <p>Keynote Address</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stefano Rodotà, Professor of Law, University of Rome "La Sapienza" |
| 10.00 am - 11.30 am | <p>Session 1: Leadership and vision for ICT in Parliament
Chair: Georgeta Ionescu, Secretary General, Chamber of Deputies of Romania</p> <p>Interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zingile A. Dingani, Secretary General, Parliament of South Africa • Alessandro Palanza, Deputy Secretary General, Chamber of Deputies of Italy <p>Open discussion</p> |
| 11.30 am - 01.00 pm | <p>Session 2: ICT in Parliament: organizational challenges
Chair: Albert Kushti, Secretary General, Parliament of Albania</p> <p>Interventions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joan Miller, Director of Parliamentary ICT, Parliament of the United Kingdom • Roberto Reale, Adviser to the President of the Senate and Coordinator of the Institutional Strengthening Programme, Senate of Argentina <p>Open discussion</p> |



Inter-Parliamentary Union



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Agenda

World e-Parliament Conference 2007

11 October 2007 - Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG)

- 01.00 pm - 03.00 pm Lunch break
- 03.00 pm - 04.30 pm ***Session 3: Parliamentary information systems: partnering to build high quality and sustainable information services***
Chair: **Claressa Surtees**, Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms, House of Representatives of Australia
- Interventions:***
- **João Luiz Pereira Marciano**, Adviser to the Head of the IT Department, Chamber of Deputies of Brazil
 - **Jeff Griffith**, Senior Adviser, Global Centre for ICT in Parliament
- Open discussion***
- 04.30 pm - 06.00 pm ***Session 4: Challenges and opportunities of the Internet in enhancing the dialogue between parliaments and citizens***
Chair: **Joseph Owona Kono**, Member of Parliament, National Assembly of Cameroon
- Interventions:***
- **Uwe Serdult**, Managing Director of the Research Centre on Direct Democracy, University of Geneva
 - **Thomas Buchsbaum**, Chair of the ad hoc Committee on e-Democracy, Council of Europe
- Open discussion***
- 06.00 pm ***Closing remarks***
- **Anders Johnsson**, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
 - **Anders Forsberg**, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments and Secretary General of the Parliament of Sweden
 - **Gherardo Casini**, Executive Coordinator of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament

Agenda

Meeting of the Global Network of IT Experts in Parliament

12 October 2007 - Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)

08:30 am – 09:00 am	Registration
09.00 am - 09.30 am	<i>Overview of the Global Network</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals and objectives of the Global Network • Developments to date • Vision for the future
09.30 am - 11.00 am	<i>Scope of expertise and best practices to exchange</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of Expertise • Suggested topics <i>Open discussion</i>
11.00 am - 11:30 am	Coffee break
11.30 am - 01.00 pm	<i>Modalities of networking and experience sharing</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on the current platform • Solutions enhancements • Alternative ways of networking and exchanging <i>Open discussion</i>
01.00 pm - 02:30 pm	Lunch break
02.30 pm - 04.00 pm	<i>The way forward</i> <i>Open discussion</i>
04.00 pm - 04.30 pm	<i>Closing remarks</i>