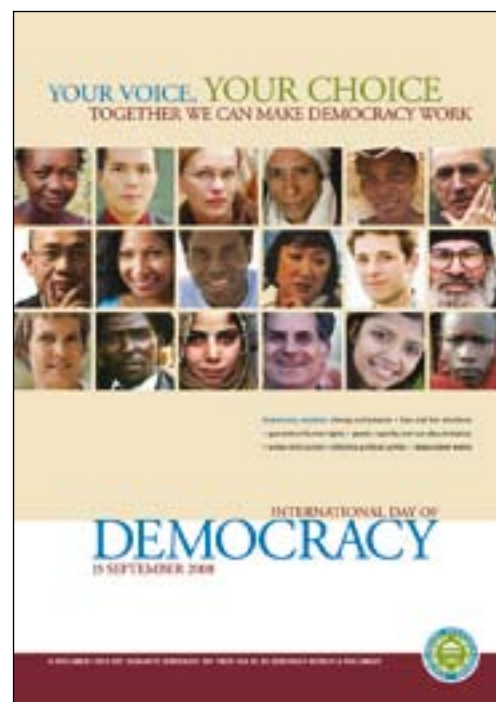


THE WORLD OF PARLIAMENTS



IPU celebrates first International Day of Democracy

Late last year the United Nations General Assembly declared 15 September International Day of Democracy. This decision holds special significance for the IPU, which brings together a cornerstone of democracy – parliaments. The IPU, which promotes democracy on the basis of the Universal Declaration on Democracy, adopted by its Members some ten years earlier, has decided to commemorate this first Day, inviting parliaments to mark the event through some form of special activity. It has also decided to hold a panel discussion at its headquarters, The House of Parliaments, and to dedicate this issue of *The World of Parliaments* to the theme of democracy, with special contributions from Mr. Jimmy Carter, former US President, Nobel Peace Prize laureate and current President of The Carter Center; Mr. Philippe Séguin, a former President of the French National Assembly and current First-President of the French *Cour des Comptes*; Prof. Benjamin Barber, a world renowned political theorist, and distinguished Senior Fellow at Demos, where he is President of CivWorld; and Ms. Marta Lagos, Executive Director of *LatinoBarómetro*. ▮



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Parliaments and challenges to democracy

To mark the first International Day of Democracy, the IPU has scheduled a panel discussion on parliaments and challenges to democracy at The House of Parliaments. Mr. Danilo Turk, President of the Republic of Slovenia; Prof. Benjamin Barber and Ms. Marta Lagos will be attendance. The special section on the IPU website dedicated to the event (<http://www.ipu.org/dem-e/idd/overview.htm>) provides complete information on the activities related to this event and to the actions parliaments are undertaking. Since freedom of expression is one of the best indicators of the health of democracy, the IPU has decided to set up an exhibition of satirical drawings. Satire is a universal art but humour and sensitivities may differ from culture to culture, region to region. The archives of the publication *Courrier international* helped us to select drawings of caricaturists from different regions of the world. The exhibition is to be launched at The House of Parliaments in September and will be on display during the 119th IPU Assembly in Geneva from 13 to 15 October, at the Geneva International Conference Center (CICG). Some of the drawings are reproduced here and others are posted on the IPU special web page on the International Day of Democracy. ▮

IPU President, Pier Ferdinando Casini, was quoted as saying:

“Democracy is the major issue of our day”



"Parliamentarians must lead by example" according to President Casini.

Q: On 15 September, IPU will be celebrating the first International Day of Democracy as proclaimed by the UN. What are the main stakes involved?

Pier Ferdinando Casini: This Day is important because democracy is the major issue of our day. Democracy is inextricably linked to the life of parliaments. A parliament has no *raison d'être* unless it is democratic, because if it is not democratically and pluralistically represented, if it does not represent different voices, cultures, ethnic groups, sensitivities and policies, it is nothing but an illusion. This 15 September should be an opportunity for us to reflect on how democratic life has evolved. It should also be a time to examine how parliamentary experience has been cemented throughout the world. Furthermore, we should state that peace and peaceful coexistence are insufficient because there can be no genuine democracy without freedom and without wide participation. In other words, there can be no real parliament without freedom.

Q: What can parliaments do to strengthen democracy?

P.F. C: They are already doing a lot of things, such as promoting greater participation by women in political life. Several of our Member Parlia-

ments have taken measures to ensure that the number of women representatives corresponds more to the actual demographics of the country, because women's representation in parliament is still weak in several countries, including - I must admit - in my country, Italy, where women are underrepresented at the legislative level. Things are also happening with regard to the decentralization of power. Direct democracy, referenda and other popular consultations are moreover being mainstreamed into the first and foremost of all acts of democratic delegation of power: the power of representation which the people delegate to parliament. In other words, let us say that between public opinion - the popular base - and the pinnacle of the State, parliament is the indispensable filter that must be able to hear the voice of the citizens. When parliament is in crisis, it is the very principle of democracy that is in crisis. When parliament does not function, when it is discredited or loses its legitimacy, it only serves to widen the communication gap between the citizens and their political representatives. It heralds the loss of confidence in the institutions we know today. That is why parliaments and parliamentarians must evolve and lead by example, including in matters of behaviour, ethical principles and morals. Parliaments must be in the vanguard of society and not be lagging behind or discredited by public opinion.

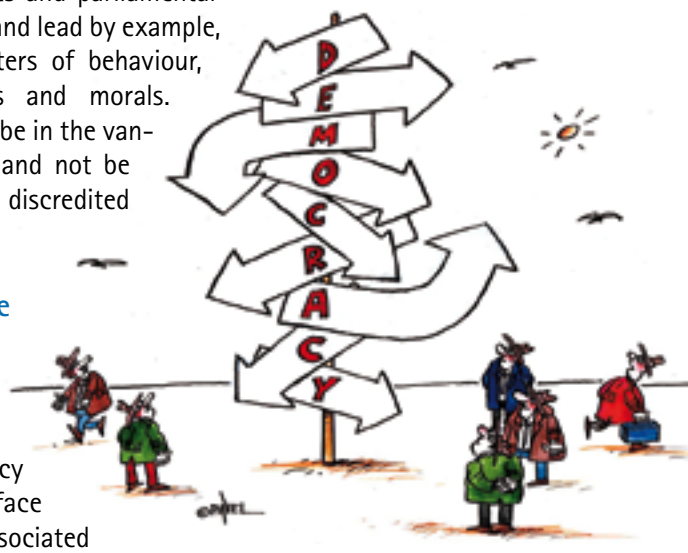
Q: What are the challenges facing democracy?

P.F.C.: Democracy must first of all face the challenges associated with human life, because human

life is under threat today by underdevelopment and food shortages which are again posing a problem. New threats hang over the lives of children and the elderly. Human life is not only jeopardized by the consequences of war and the use of arms, but also by some kinds of research that sometimes know no limits, which manipulate individuals and seek to produce sophisticated forms of euthanasia. I would like to underscore that human life and dignity must remain at the centre of our concerns.

Q: What would you say to young people who are uninterested in politics and who are less and less involved in society?

P.F.C.: I would coin a phrase from an illustrious compatriot who has worked very hard to help underprivileged or abandoned youth. To those who would say that politics is dirty, he would reply: what would be the point of having clean hands if you keep them in your pockets? Like him, I say to young people that they should get their hands dirty with politics. Because the more politics becomes politicking, the further away it is from the people. Therefore, the more we work together to improve politics, the more open and transparent it will be. ▀



Drawing by Pavel (Romania)

Democracy is worth fighting for

Over the last twenty years we have witnessed an unprecedented move towards democracy in every corner of the world. Country after country abandoned authoritarian rule in favor of multi-party democracies with an elected parliament at its centre. Does that mean that we live in a more democratic world today?

Not necessarily. In our increasingly fragmented yet interdependent world many processes and decisions directly affecting peoples' lives escape normal democratic checks and balances. Globalization and international cooperation involve decision-making that lacks democratic control. And even at the level of the sovereign nation State where not so long ago all important decisions were taken, the central institution of de-

mocracy – parliament – faces a crisis of legitimacy in many countries. Parliament is at pains to reflect all components of society, does not control the agenda and has scarce resources at its disposal. Far too often it must also contend with a lack of commitment by the country's leaders to the sharing of political power that is so essential to democratic parliamentary processes.

Nevertheless, democracy has achieved a level of acceptance that it has perhaps never had before. It is a universally recognized ideal as well as a system of government. As an ideal, democracy aims essentially to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual. As a system of government, democracy is the best way of achiev-



Photo IPU/J. Salgado

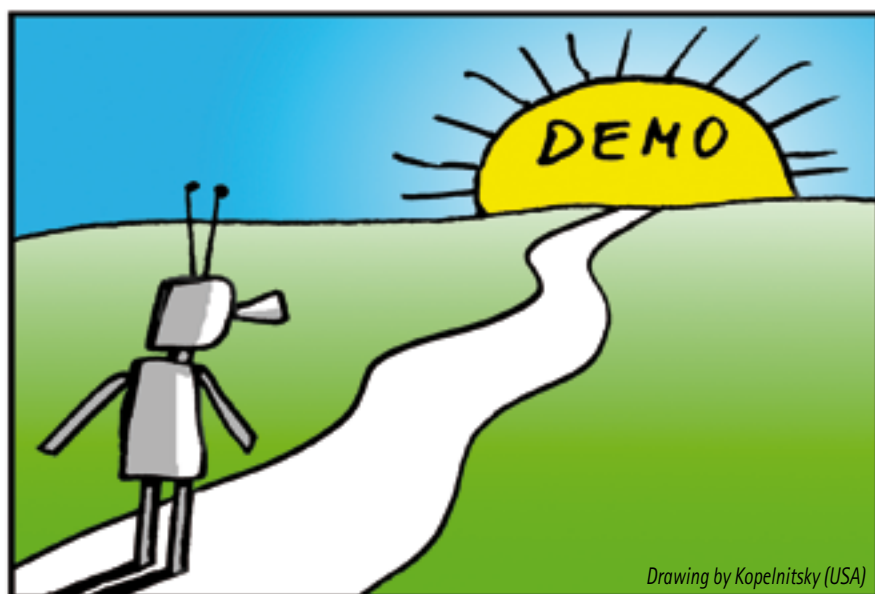
Anders B. Johnsson, IPU Secretary General.

ing these objectives. It is also the only system of government that has the capacity for self-correction.

Democracy is therefore worth fighting for. The Inter-Parliamentary Union has been engaged in that struggle since its inception and can be proud of its many achievements.

The IPU embraces the International Day of Democracy. It invites all parliaments to join in celebrating democracy's achievements. Let us also pause to reflect on how we can surmount the challenges facing democracy today and bring about effective rule by the people, for the benefit of each and every one of us. *Demos kratos!* ▀

Anders B. Johnsson,
IPU Secretary General



Drawing by Kopelnitsky (USA)

IPU PUBLICATIONS

Evaluating parliament: A self-assessment toolkit for parliaments

This self-assessment toolkit invites parliaments to evaluate their democratic performance against a set of criteria based on the core values set out in IPU's groundbreaking study *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*. The purpose is not to rank parliaments but to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses on the basis of international criteria in order to determine priorities for strengthening the institution of parliament.



"True democracy requires an active parliament."

by Mr. Philippe Séguin

This is a translation of a speech delivered by **Mr. Philippe Séguin** at a symposium entitled "Parliamentarianism in the 21st century", which was held in Quebec, Canada. A former Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Mr. Séguin served as President of the French National Assembly between 1993 and 1997. He is currently the First-President of the *Cour des Comptes* (French national audit office). Mr. Séguin has published several works, most notably: *Réussir l'alternance*, *La Force de convaincre*; *Louis Napoléon Le Grand* (1990, won the *Second empire de la fondation Napoléon* prize); *240 dans un fauteuil – La saga des présidents de l'Assemblée*, *De l'Europe en général et de la France en particulier*; *C'est quoi la politique ?* (a children's story) and *Itinéraire dans la France d'en bas, d'en haut et d'ailleurs* (memoirs, 2003).



Photo : Cour des Comptes

The fact that a country has a parliament does not mean it has a democracy. We can all think of many past and even present sham parliaments that have upheld bogus democracies. But we also know that while the existence of a parliament is no guarantee of democracy, there can be no democracy without parliament – and the freer and more active the parliament, the more genuine and vibrant the democracy will be. This is not merely begging the question. We can take it as a given that democracy is predicated on the existence of a body in which the proposals put to the community are openly debated, which has the means to oversee the work of the executive branch, and which lays down the main principles underpinning life in the community.

At least three conditions have to be met for a parliament to be truly democratic:

- it must be constituted in such a way as to be genuinely representative;
- it must be allowed to function without impediment;
- it must have substantive powers enabling it to discharge its three objectives: to legislate (in particular in terms of finance, by adopting the budget), to debate and to oversee.

These three conditions have been met in a wide variety of ways in systems that we continue to hold as equally democratic. The question is whether they still provide valid re-

sponses – and the question must be asked because the relevance of the solutions we endeavour to outline depends on what form democracy takes in the future. Parliaments are pondering their role and their methods, but it is in fact democracy itself that is in crisis – a crisis that in and of itself does not suffice to explain the shortcomings of parliaments, but one that more modern parliaments could probably help to shake off and overcome.

Clearly the future of parliamentarianism in the 21st century cannot be taken for granted, or why would the question arise? In fact, even though democracy has theoretically made inroads everywhere, at the same time as the past 15 years have witnessed the emergence of new parliaments or seen parliaments believe they have gained prerogatives previously denied them, the crisis affects not just the longstanding democracies: it is just as real among their younger relatives.

Of course, the legislative frenzy accompanying the introduction of radically new legislation can buoy young parliaments. And yet, the same causes having the same effects, they are already visibly in the throes of a crisis. Why? There are three main reasons, their intensity varying depending on the country and the system.

A perceptible crisis

The first explanation for the crisis lies in the fact that the growing complexity of the decisions to be

made, the steadily increasing internationalization of the problems to be solved and the swift action required in response have led to the apparently inevitable rise of the executive – the very same executive, ironically, that is itself often thwarted, dominated and manipulated, for the same reasons, by a new competitor for power, the technocracy, a technical authority whose claim to power is based on constraints it believes it alone can assess and knowledge of technical realities it deems it alone has.

This transfer of authority usually follows a well-known path: real power passes from the legislative authorities to the government – this has long been the case – then, at least in part, from each minister to his cabinet – this is relatively new – and from all cabinets to the prime minister's office, which tends to become an executive all its own – a more recent development.

In some cases, however, the legislative and the executive themselves together deliberately waive their prerogatives and transfer decision-making responsibility to committees of experts or people presumed to be independent. The legislative and the executive may, without so deciding expressly, tolerate the rise, to their detriment, of competing authorities. In many countries it is the judicial authorities who encroach on other jurisdictions; no longer content to apply and interpret the law, they supplement and ultimately make it.

Some chambers have become what are often mere antechambers, most of the elected representatives being reduced to ensuring voter loyalty. At the most, the chamber selects several from among its members to move on to higher callings. And real dialogue in the chamber, in many cases a pipe-dream, is limited to head-to-head discussions between the government and the majority, whereas the general public is generally admitted only to the often artificial and even sham spectacle of the majority and the opposition going through the motions of debate.

This is why, in many countries, most members of parliament are asked to look first to their constituency or to the party's well-being (if they have been elected by a system of proportional representation), while the others experience parliament as a kind of purgatory, a training centre or reform school – in any event an obligatory first step on the way up the ladder to the exalted rank of member of the executive or to another career. That is to say, many parliamentarians have the feeling that what is expected of them is basically patience, resignation and a degree of complacency...

Another reason for the crisis is the frequently ambiguous relationship between the executive and legislative branches. In some countries, parliament still all too often stubbornly tries to compete with the government in areas that are inevitably the latter's prerogative, instead of seeking to de-

fine an area of its own in which its influence can be fully and effectively exercised.

The role of parliament is to debate the orientations into which the government's initiatives will have to be incorporated, and ultimately to ensure the latter are true to the former. Indeed, deadlock is the result when parliament goes head to head with the government in the same field.

Is the classic parliamentary system bad for parliament?

The reverse – the scenario in which the legislative branch is almost totally under the thumb of the executive – is not much better. In that respect, one wonders whether the classic parliamentary system is not, paradoxically, becoming parliament's own worst enemy: when the head of the executive is also the majority leader, the majority's room for manoeuvre is sharply reduced. Where the government is supposed to emerge from and be accountable to parliament, an almost hierarchical relationship develops between the government and the majority. The corollary is uniformity of views and expression. Another, parallel outcome is a Manichean, almost caricatural relationship between majority and opposition, one in which genuine debate is replaced by easily predicted form and automatic reflexes.

There are those who will be shocked by these comments, especially in countries with the Westminster system of parliament. Forgive me, but in the course of my duties I have visited and studied a good forty parliaments. Those whose members expressed the least frustration were part of presidential systems with strict separation of powers.

The situation is all the more regrettable in that parliament, parliaments have distinguished themselves in recent decades above all by their inability to change their methods and forms. This is the third reason for the crisis. The dilemma facing parliaments may have inherent explanations, but it

is also part of a broader, unprecedented crisis whose roots can be traced to the advent of an almost exclusively procedural concept of democracy.

In the past, democracy was preserved, enhanced and promoted essentially by regulating the balance of power. Today, the biggest problem may well be how to counteract the reduced scope of political power. The point is no longer to referee between the rule of the people and national sovereignty, but rather to prevent, as much as possible, the steady erosion of sovereignty, to halt those who continue to use any means to divide, limit and corral the exercise of sovereign power.

The goal of democracy was once to establish principles of legitimacy and responsibility, to give precedence to the rule of law over the use of force; in short, democracy was inseparable from a system of values ... It amounted to a form of politics, or rather to a certain concept of politics that did not encompass all things political and that varied from one country to another, but that did give universal expression to something essential about the role, place and nature of politics.

Thanks to universal suffrage, democracy had placed politics above all else, while making sure everything did not boil down to politics. For the hallmark of democracy is not so much the separation of power as it is the distinction made between State and society, respect for an invisible dividing line between the will of the people and the will of individuals, between the public and the private spheres.

Democracy is not so much a political system in which "power curbs power" as it is one in which the omnipotence of the will of the people is limited by pluralism, freedom of expression and thought, equality and the right to own property. Democracy is more than just government of the people by the people and for the people, or the establishment of institutional counterweights to power.

There can be no true democracy without a culture of democracy, without a broadly shared attachment to the inviolable and sacred principles guaranteeing respect for a certain concept of man. ■



He was able to work with complete freedom. Oh, it's him?!
Drawing by Plantu (France)

"Good electoral process and sound democratic institutions require commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms"

by Mr. Jimmy Carter

Mr. James Earl "Jimmy" Carter, Jr., served as President of the United States from 1977 to 1981. In 2002, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Before he became President, Mr. Carter served two terms in the Georgia Senate and as Governor of Georgia from 1971 to 1975. As President, Mr. Carter pursued the Camp David Accords, the Panama Canal treaties, and the second round of Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT II). Mr. Carter sought to put a stronger emphasis on human rights. After leaving office, Mr. Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, founded The Carter Center, a non-governmental, not-for-profit organization that works to advance human rights and alleviate human suffering. He has travelled extensively to conduct peace negotiations, observe elections, and advance disease prevention and eradication in developing nations.



Photo: The Carter Center

On November 8, 2007, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed that the International Day of Democracy would be commemorated annually on September 15. In its resolution, UNGA calls upon Member States as well as parliamentarians, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and individual citizens to commemorate this day. I applaud the IPU for raising public awareness about this first International Day of Democracy, and for the opportunity it provides for collective reflection on the current challenges to the global advancement of democracy and human rights.

My Carter Center colleagues and I have been working to promote democracy and human rights for over 20 years. Since 1989, we have observed 70 elections in 28 countries. We believe that election observation is a critical tool to promote and support the legitimacy of democratically elected governments. Most recently, we observed the Constituent Assembly elections in Nepal. These elections were transformational as they gave Nepalis the opportunity to change the basic structure of their country from a monarchy to a republic. They

ended a 12-year civil war, and offered many previously marginalized people an equal role in government and civil society.

All of The Carter Center's election observation missions are conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. This document – to which the IPU is also a signatory – marked a critical milestone in the development of election observation and was endorsed at the United Nations in 2005 by 22 election observation organizations across the globe. That number has now risen to 32.

The electoral process is part of the larger practice we call democracy

The Declaration of Principles is important because it provides consistent, professional standards for international election observation and has resulted in the creation of a community of practice among the endorsing organizations. Working together, these organizations can more effectively address the multitude of challenges facing democracy and elections. All of the endorsing organizations agree that the electoral process is about

much more than just election day and that the electoral process itself is part of the larger practice we call democracy.

Since the endorsement of the Declaration of Principles, we have seen increasing recognition of this reality in the work of many of our international and domestic partner organizations, as well as a concerted move towards a more integrated approach to the promotion of democracy and electoral assistance. This approach recognizes that a good quality electoral process and sound democratic institutions require a sustained commitment to a range of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

"We believe that the success of an election hinges not only on the fulfillment of the right of every citizen to vote and to be elected, but also on the fulfillment of their rights."

In the field of election observation we see this evolution reflected in the work of The Carter Center and partner organizations like the IPU and many others, which are together attempting to build broad consensus on criteria for democratic elections. These efforts build upon the groundbreaking Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections, adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Council in 1994, as well as the work of other credible and impartial organizations from around the world.

In essence, we are seeking to re-establish the essential human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent treaties as criteria against which genuine democratic elections are assessed. We believe that the success of an election hinges not only on the fulfillment of the right of every citizen to vote and to be elected, but also on the fulfillment of their rights, including the rights: to participate in public decision-making; to move freely about their country; to express their opinions before and after election day; to associate and to assemble; to have access to an effective remedy for those acts that violate their rights and freedoms; and to have a transparent and accountable government that acts according to the rule of law.

By more firmly rooting election assessment criteria in fundamental rights and freedoms, we hope to better assist the countries we observe in their continued efforts to create just and representative governments whose democratic legitimacy is grounded in the will of the electors.

We recognize that there remains much work to be done. In several recent elections, high levels of violence, intimidation, and other human rights violations have been the cause of much concern for many of us. At the same time, there is evidence in some parts of the world of growing opposition to the work of highly credible international election observation organizations and attempts to dilute commitments that have been

made in support of good democratic practice.

My own country has had two troubled elections recently, in 2000 and in 2004. Following both elections, I worked with other US political leaders, including former President Gerald Ford and former Secretary of State James Baker, to develop recommendations for reforming and improving the US electoral system. While the US has made some progress, it still has a long way to go.

For example, in the United States, it is still very difficult for international organizations to observe elections. We have had low voter turnout, around 64 per cent for the 2004 election. In addition, there is little restraint on the amount of money that can be spent on campaigning. Potential presidential candidates have to raise hundreds of millions of dollars to be seriously considered as a

nominee. Access to the media is unequal, and there is not a central election commission that is responsible for election administration on a national scale.

I point out these issues to underscore the fact that all nations need to learn how best to have an honest, fair, open, safe, democratic election that lives up to the obligations prescribed by international law. To do so, political leaders must be committed to the democratic process and to building strong and vigorous democratic institutions; they must respect human rights and must take the steps necessary to fulfill their international obligation to hold good electoral processes. Only by doing so can we protect the good name of democracy. It is my sincere hope that you will join me in commemorating the International Day of Democracy this year, and for many years to come. ▀



Drawing by Kazanevsky (Ukraine)

"Above all, democracy is a promise of liberty"

by Ms. Marta Lagos

Ms. Marta Lagos is the founder and Executive Director of *LatinoBarómetro*, a yearly regional opinion barometer survey conducted in 18 Latin American countries. Formerly the head of a Chilean think tank (CERC) that conducted opinion polls during Pinochet's regime, Ms. Lagos heads her own polling company, MORI (Chile), which has been associated with MORI UK since 1994. She is a member of the World Values Survey team and the steering committee of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES). Marta Lagos is a consultant at international organizations such as UNDP and the ILO and also provides consultancy services to the World Bank. She is editor of the World Opinion Section of the International Journal of Public Opinion Research, is a distinguished Fellow at the Claus M. Halle Institute for Global Learning and was awarded the 2008 Helen Dinerman Award.



Photo: www.businesschile.cl

As celebrations to mark the bicentenary of independence from Spain take place, what does it take to consolidate democracy in the Latin American region? Only 30 years ago when transition processes started no one foresaw the present challenges. Democratization in the region has been slow and heterogeneous. Although citizens acknowledge that there have been some positive changes, so far these have been insufficient to achieve the kind of transformation in governance or social and economic structures that would help consolidate democracy. In fact, societies have evolved politically and economically, sometimes considerably, but they have not been transformed. More striking is the perception of democracy as being unresponsive and elitist.

Increasing discontent in Latin America in spite of five years of sustained growth between 2002 and 2007 highlights the core of the challenges the region is facing insofar as it brings a new type of inequality: the distribution of the benefits of progress. The region faces today not only the historical inequality of sheer poverty which the population has stoically endured for centuries, but the new inequality that development brings. Far from being democratic, progress and modernity come with a filter, yet again discriminating against the underprivileged in society, widening the gap between

the haves and the have nots. A steady 90 per cent of the population in the past decade considers that there is an unfair distribution of wealth. Indeed, Latin America has been able to "recover from the past", namely the levels of poverty of the 1980s, a reminder that history does not necessarily bring nations forward, and that it has taken 28 years to recover from those levels.

"The region has gained with democratic rule a minimal guarantee of civil liberties"

The region has gained with democratic rule a minimal guarantee of civil liberties, a tool that these 18 societies are using to push for more democracy. With higher levels of education and perception of rights than ever before we find more critical citizens who in turn expect more of democracy. Simultaneously negative consensus is overwhelming: consensus on the lack of social and economic guarantees that democracy has not been able to produce; consensus on the unsolved basic conflicts in society, between rich and poor, between entrepreneurs and workers, etc.; consensus on the unequal distribution of wealth, progress and development.

Mexican peasants were reported as saying after independence, some 200 years ago, that "It is just another

priest in a different mule" referring to change of power from one oligarchy (Spaniards) to another (whites). Universal suffrage, in the democratic third wave, has brought the possibility of changing "the priest" and keeping "the mule". Finding the right successor to the priest — namely, political leadership that can deliver the expected social and economic improvements — is the first and foremost task. Political conflict and instability may be necessary to achieve these societal transformations, and thus ultimately to secure democracy among increasingly critical and expectant populations. Things necessarily need to get worse in many cases before they get better, because the transformation that is needed is not only possible through reform, but also through rebirth. This is the case of Bolivia, Ecuador, and we will probably see similar patterns in Paraguay, following the alternance in power that has taken place.

The good news is that "the people" are finding novel channels to express their demands beyond the representational weakness of political parties. Spontaneous unorganized protest unguided by political organizations is a new phenomenon. Critical, empowered citizens are the result of 30 years of undemocratic democratic rule. A second independence with a full, functioning democracy will be

achieved insofar as their critical citizens are pushing for transformation of their societies into democratic ones.

"The Latin American population has no misunderstanding about what should lie at the end of the tunnel (democratic prosperity)"

Above all, democracy is a promise of liberty, a mix of political and socio-economic goods that allow each and everyone the right to choose, to be in charge of one's own life. The Latin American population has no misunderstanding about what should lie at the end of the tunnel (democratic prosperity); this is what keeps the vast majority clinging to democracy. For many who observe the region with the eyes of the past, there is a normative problem with the legitimacy of institutions, while for those who live in the region the problem lies with the

legitimacy of the exercise of power.

Those who hold power and exercise it in their interest have to be made accountable.

Barriers have to be known and transparent; reward for effort has to be recognizable.

The future must not depend on where you were born or the colour of your skin, and the production of public goods has to be recognizable for the vast majority of the population.

Legitimacy of institutions is a function of all of the above, trust in unknown third parties depends on equal treatment, fairness of access and process.

As Albert Hirschman put it, people will not delay their passion in favour of their interest and nations will only sit face to face after having been at each other's throat for a prolonged period of time, they cannot beat their opponent and must negotiate a peaceful understanding.

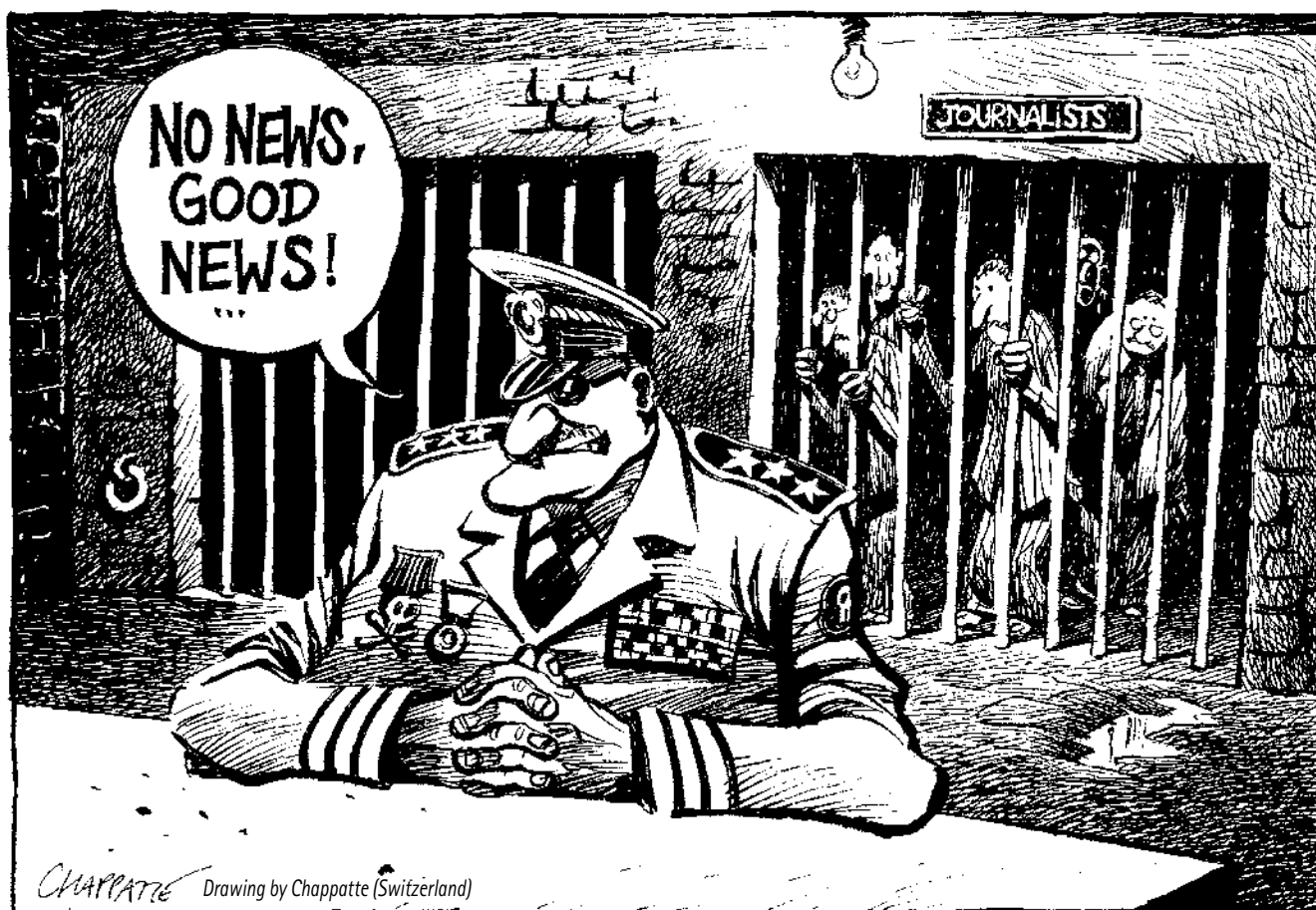
The construction of democratic societies has a necessary path of being at each other's throat before sitting down to resolve a conflict. At present, some societies are only starting that process, such as Bolivia and Ecuador

and others, such as Paraguay, will be in the near future. Others still are already sitting face to face: Brazil, Chile and Mexico.

Negotiations are taking place to reset each other's place in the newly structured societies. These new structures have to make room for minorities, different races, languages and a plurality of views and ideas.

Political party systems are only starting to reflect the need for these changes that lie ahead. Alternance in power is taking place after many decades of single-party rule such as in Mexico, Uruguay and Paraguay or white rule such as the case of Bolivia. Not less significant is access by women to political office that demonstrates a demand for change in Chile and Argentina for very different reasons.

History has shown that societies achieve profound transformation through war and/or revolution, yet Latin America's recent events show that transformation is taking place in a series of small crisis that are more profound than simple reforms, but less violent than war and revolution. ▀



Can democracy survive interdependence?

by Benjamin R. Barber

Benjamin R. Barber is an internationally renowned political theorist, and a distinguished Senior Fellow at Demos where he is President of CivWorld, the international NGO sponsoring Interdependence Day and the Paradigm Project. Benjamin Barber was Walt Whitman Professor of Political Science at Rutgers University for 32 years, and then Gershon and Carol Kekst Professor of Civil Society at The University of Maryland. He consults regularly with political and civic leaders in the United States and around the world, and for five years served as an informal consultant to President Bill Clinton – chronicled in Barber's book *The Truth of Power: Intellectual Affairs in the Clinton White House* published in paperback by Columbia University Press in 2008. Benjamin Barber's 17 books include the classic *Strong Democracy* (1984), the international best-seller *Jihad vs. McWorld* (1995 with a post-9/11 edition in 2001, translated into twenty-seven languages); and *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*, published in 2007 in the United States and in seven foreign editions.



Photo: Civ World

From the founding of early modern nation-States, to quite recent times, democracy has been tethered to national communities and sovereign States in ways that lend popular government its efficacy and legitimacy. Rooted in the social contract, and producing forms of sovereignty and rule-making that are popular, democracy has permitted peoples around the world to govern themselves – if not directly, then through chosen representatives meeting in parliamentary assemblies to pursue common goods and the popular will.

However, since the end of the Second World War when the sovereign nations of Europe abandoned their long history of unilateralism and reciprocal hostility that were products of their sovereignty, and instead sought ways to pool that sovereignty in the name of cooperation – and when global trade began to steal from national parliaments their capacity to govern financial and labour markets – we have been living in a new world of interdependence where our challenges and problems are global. Yet – and this is the crucial modern dilemma – though the challenges are global, our democratic remedies remain national and parochial.

At a time when democracy is more widespread than ever, the problems

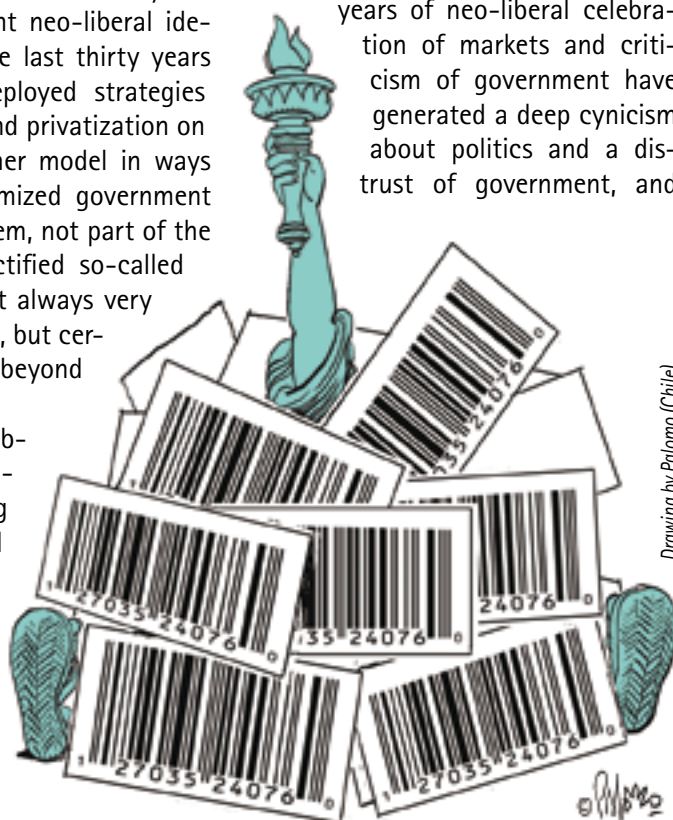
faced by humankind – crime, drugs, prostitution, runaway markets, public health perils, weapons of mass destruction, environmental deterioration, labour migration, terrorism and war – have become global and are less susceptible than ever to democratic regulation and control. Sovereignty and with it, democracy, are at risk. This diminution of sovereign power has been exacerbated by the success of a potent neo-liberal ideology, which in the last thirty years has effectively deployed strategies of marketization and privatization on the Reagan/Thatcher model in ways that have delegitimized government ("part of the problem, not part of the answer") and sanctified so-called "free markets" (not always very free or competitive, but certainly private and beyond regulation).

Although neo-liberal rhetoric is directed against "big government" and "welfare bureaucracy", its victim has often been the ideals and practices of democracy itself. At the very moment when globalization

is removing many of the most important public goods from sovereignty's compass, the very idea of public goods is under assault within nation-States in ways that further cripple citizens and parliaments alike.

"In the first world, many young people do not even bother to vote"

Adding to this dilemma, thirty years of neo-liberal celebration of markets and criticism of government have generated a deep cynicism about politics and a distrust of government, and



Drawing by Palomo (Chile)

these have morphed into cynicism about popular sovereignty and a distrust of democracy itself. Democracy's high point in terms of its spread may as a consequence also be its low point in terms of its reputation. In the first world, many young people do not even bother to vote and the word "politics" sometimes seems to have become a dirty synonym for corruption, while in the developing world we have seen many societies (e.g. Zimbabwe) moving backwards rather than forward.

Europe remains a model of democratic pooled sovereignty, but it too suffers from a "democratic deficit", and critics complain that it has been more successful economically than politically. In many places, the displacement of governments by markets has replaced the ideal of the citizen with the ideal of the consumer – shopping as a surrogate for politics. This erosion of public liberty and our capacity to use common power to address common problems makes dealing with interdepend-

ence and globalization even more difficult.

These challenges to democracy require responses from citizens and their representatives alike. It is not enough for citizens to blame the politicians they elect for failing them! It demands an adjustment to the realities of interdependence,

The fate of democracy depends not on the size of the challenges facing it, but on the size of the political will deployed to take on the problems. In other words, as always, it depends on us. ▀

What can politicians and citizens offer to help democracy survive?

- Acknowledge the brute facts of interdependence and globalization and seek approaches to democracy that are appropriate to collaboration and interdependence. In a world where the problems are global, democrats must find a way either to globalize democracy or democratic globalization, or they are likely to find themselves facing global anarchy (and global force and fraud) without possessing global tools to take them on.
- Recognize that representative government, although a remarkable invention that allows democracy to function in large-scale, complex societies where direct participatory self-government is no longer possible, wins its victory to some degree at the price of the "iron law of oligarchy". Representatives quickly lose touch with their electors and can morph into elites more wedded to their own culture of power than to the public good.
- Restore the balance between free markets and democratic institutions: both democracy and capitalism work best in tandem, when competition, entrepreneurship and inventiveness are assured by markets, but justice, law and stability are guaranteed by democratic regulation and oversight. There have been times when statist ambitions have stultified markets and encroached on private liberty. But in our time, market fundamentalism has stultified democracy and encroached on public liberty. The balance needs to be reset.
- Strengthen civic education in the setting of interdependence, where citizenship is understood to require both local participation and global responsibility – "glocality" is a useful neologism to capture the needs of citizens whose participation tends to be local but whose responsibilities are ever more global.
- Reinforce the idea that responsibilities are the twin of rights, so that citizens' obligations start but do not end with voting. For democracy is measured less by the achievements of the leadership than the willingness of the citizenry to accept responsibility for governance.

- Utilize the new digital technologies and the world wide web as tools of civic engagement and civic education across borders. Democracy is founded on effective communication, and while the world is more disparate and complex than ever, we have new tools that until now have been used primarily for commerce, but which cry out to be used for civic information and democratic engagement. Global citizens need global modes of communication: the Internet beckons!
- NGOs, foundations, multinational companies, universities and social movements have begun to establish the global civic infrastructure we need. Democracy grows bottom-up and is grounded in civil society and engaged citizens participating in civic life. Democracy without borders means citizens without borders, and citizens without borders are possible only when there is civil society without borders. Social capital is produced by engaged citizens: when it is globalized, transnational democracy becomes possible.
- Look to international organizations of the United Nations system and the International Financial Institutions (World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, World Bank) as potential instruments of democratic globalization. These institutions tend to represent the sovereign nations that created them rather than the international ideals in whose name they were established. But they are controlled by democracies, and can be put to democratic purposes if their constituent members choose to do so. The Security Council is more important than the Secretary-General's office, and the WTO serves financial interests rather than social justice, only because its members choose to treat it that way.
- Among international organizations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union plays a special role since it provides for information exchange and cooperation among democratic parliamentarians themselves. It has a special responsibility for thinking through the dilemmas of how to globalize democracy in an era of global challenges when archaic sovereign States still affect to be the key players.

The United Nations and democracy promotion.

by Mr. Roland Rich

Mr. Roland Rich, the Executive Head of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UN-DEF), brings to the job over 30 years of experience as a diplomat, a scholar and a democracy promotion practitioner. Prior to his appointment to UNDEF, Mr. Rich was a member of the directing staff at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies of the Australian Defence College, teaching and mentoring colonel-level officers undertaking a master's degree in international relations. In 2005 Mr. Rich was a research Fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington DC. Between 1998 and 2005, Mr. Rich was the Foundation Director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions at the Australian National University which is Australia's democracy promotion institute undertaking projects in the Asia-Pacific region. He has also contributed to the scholarly literature on democracy and democracy promotion.



Photo: UN

The UN approaches the field of democracy promotion burdened with some difficult baggage. Nowhere in the UN Charter does the word "democracy" appear, at Soviet insistence at the time of drafting. The UN decision making structure in which the permanent five members of the Security Council have a privileged position cannot be said to be in keeping with basic democratic principles. And even the most generous analyst would concede that a significant number, and perhaps even a majority, of UN Member States do not practise democracy.

Nevertheless, the UN has over the past decade adopted a forthright role in democracy promotion highlighted by the Millennium Summit of 2000, where the world's leaders resolved to "spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development." Accordingly, the UNDP has made democratic governance one of its central themes; over 100 UN Member States have sought guidance from the UN Electoral Assistance Division; and the UN Democracy Fund was established based on the 2005 UN Summit's Outcome Document, which affirmed that "democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, eco-

nomic, social and cultural system and their full participation in all aspects of their lives."

Though the word does not appear in the Charter, there is nevertheless a strong normative basis for the UN's role. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes clear that: "The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures." And the Human Rights Committee's General Comment 25 of 1996 elaborates on the meaning of "genuine" by requiring: freedoms of expression, assembly and association; universal suffrage; freedom to support or oppose the government without coercion; and the need for different political views to be presented in elected assemblies. A resolution by the Commission on Human Rights in 2000 also makes clear that electoral processes must be open to multiple parties. Genuine elections combined with respect for human rights will go a long way to assuring the effective functioning of a democracy.

**It is no coincidence
that human rights
are best protected in
democratic societies**

Why has the UN adopted this difficult path, sometimes creating difficulties with some of its Member States? The end of the Cold War allowed the international community to consider the issue of democracy in a new light. After the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights determined that "Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing", Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali led the way with *An Agenda for Democratization* in 1996 in which he described democracy as "the basic element of a peaceful and cooperative international system." By the time his successor, Kofi Annan, presented his report *In Larger Freedom* in 2005, the then Secretary-General was able to claim that "the United Nations does more than any other single organization to promote and strengthen democratic institutions and practices around the world."

The reason for the UN's enthusiasm for democracy can be found in the relationship between democracy and each of the three main purposes of the UN. To put it in a nutshell, the UN has come to the firm conclusion that democracy is an essential requirement for the realization of peace, human rights and development.

Democratic peace theory has intrigued the international commu-

Democracy

~~Democracy~~



Drawing by Côté (Canada)

nity since it was first espoused in the eighteenth century by Immanuel Kant. For much of the next couple of centuries it looked like a hopelessly utopian idea but in more recent times the evidence has become irrefutable that consolidated democracies do not go to war against each other. Democracy as a path to peace gives the UN a means to achieve its most important objective.

It is no coincidence that human rights are best protected in democratic societies. The two concepts are mutually reinforcing. It is through respect for human rights that societies create the space for peaceful democratic contestation and it is through these democratic processes that human rights find their most ardent defenders. The human rights records of even established democracies require further improvement but the self-critical mechanisms of democracy offer the means for that improvement.

The relationship between democracy and development is the most difficult to establish. The initial idea that development was an essential prerequisite of democracy has been reappraised by Amartya Sen who explains that it is wrong to ask if a country is "fit for democracy" because in practice nations become "fit through democracy". While the evidence continues to be assembled, we are in a strong position to assert that sustainable quality development requires democracy and the higher the quality of democracy, the higher the quality of development.

"The United Nations should not restrict its role to norm-setting but should expand its help to its Member States to further broaden and deepen democratic trends throughout the world. To that end, I support the creation of a democracy fund at the United Nations to provide assistance to countries seeking to establish

or strengthen their democracy." Kofi Annan's vision has come to fruition. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has been able to shape the role of the UN Democracy Fund by requiring it "to pay particular attention to civil society organizations. Their work and participation remain the key to building democracies from the ground up."

Today UNDEF is strongly supported by some 35 donors among the UN's Member States. It focuses its energy on strengthening the voice of civil society in the democratic process. It disburses around US\$ 25 million each year to civil society organizations around the world contributing to civic education, to strengthening the voice of women and vulnerable groups, and to other ways of nurturing the peaceful contestation of ideas and policies. It is the latest and most direct articulation of the UN's commitment to democracy promotion. ▀

IPU and democracy

IPU promotes democracy, in particular by strengthening the institution of parliament. Over the years, it has helped to develop democratic principles of governance and international standards for free and fair elections, and has helped to establish parliamentary systems in more than 50 countries.

Parliaments conduct a variety of tasks, including:

- making laws;
- approving taxation and government spending; and
- overseeing the activities of the executive branch of government.

The challenge for parliaments is to carry out these functions as democratically as possible.

A democratic parliament is one that is:

- **Representative**, which means that it reflects, as closely as possible, the social and political diversity of the population, encourages the full participation of women, and ensures equal rights and protection for all of its members so that they can freely exercise their mandate;

- **Transparent**, which means that it works in a way that the public can see, either directly or through the mass media, such as print or electronic news organizations
- **Accessible**, which means that the public, including associations and movements of civil society, can be involved in its work;
- **Accountable**, which means that there are opportunities for voters

to hold members of parliament to account for their performance in office and integrity of conduct; and

- **Effective**, which means that parliament's work, which encompasses not only domestic law-making and oversight but also the increasingly important realm of international relations, must be well organized to ensure that it serves the needs of the whole population. ▀

Drawing by Glez (Burkina Faso)



Democracy – Facts and Figures

All data is taken from the IPU PARLINE database on national parliaments.

44148: The number of members of parliament in the world. The statutory number of seats in parliament is in fact 44766, but not all seats are filled at any given time. In the House of Representatives of Cyprus, for example, the 24 seats allocated to the Turkish Cypriot community have remained vacant since 1963.

265: The total number of national parliamentary chambers. There are functioning parliaments in 189 countries, but the number of chambers is greater, as 77 (40.31%) parliaments are bicameral (meaning that there is a lower and an upper chamber). There is no functioning parliament in Bangladesh, Fiji or Myanmar.

3000: The world's largest parliament, the National People's Congress of China, has 3000 members. 637 (21.33%) are women. Deputies are elected by the People's Congresses of the country's 23 provinces, five autonomous regions and four municipalities directly under the Central Government, and by the armed forces (PLA). The full parliament meets for only a few days each year, and deputies have their own professions. The 175-member Standing Committee of the National People's Congress exercises legislative and oversight powers between full sessions of parliament.

9: The Senate of Palau has only 9 members. The lower house of the Palau Parliament, the Chamber of Delegates, is larger, with 16 members. Unusually, both chambers are directly elected.

0: The number of women in the parliaments of Belize, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Oman, Palau, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu.

IPU PROGRAMMES:

Setting standards and guidelines

Key documents and publications

- ❑ Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections (1994)
- ❑ Universal Declaration on Democracy (1997)
- ❑ Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century:
A guide to good practice (2006)

Strengthening representative institutions

The IPU provides advice, guidance and technical support for parliaments in political transition or in post-conflict situations in order to help them fulfil their constitutional mandates. In recent years, the IPU has played an active part in the development of parliamentary systems in over 50 countries, including Afghanistan, Albania, Burundi, Cambodia, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Haiti, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, and Viet Nam.

Promoting respect for human rights

The IPU helps the parliamentary community – more than 40,000 legislators – to represent their constituents, freely and safely. In 1976, it established its Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, which investigates violations of these rights. Since then, it has examined more than 500 incidents in over 100 countries and in a great many cases been able to secure a satisfactory outcome. It also builds the capacity of parliaments and parliamentarians to defend human rights.

Promoting partnership between men and women in politics

The IPU promotes the improvement of the status of women and, in particular, encourages their participation in politics. For the world organization of parliaments, the achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and in a complementary way. In spite of a growing number of women in high office, over 80 per cent of the world's parliamentarians are men. The IPU monitors the progress of women in politics around the world. It has become the recognized authority and source of statistical information in this field. Through training programmes, the IPU also ensures that women elected to parliament can contribute effectively to parliamentary processes.

Promoting knowledge of parliaments

The PARLINE database on national parliaments contains authoritative information on the structure and working methods of every national parliament. IPU also undertakes original research in cooperation with parliaments and other partners.

Democracy in international affairs

The IPU also promotes democracy in international relations. Since the early 1990s, the IPU has been working closely with the United Nations to make international relations and decision-making more transparent as well as more effective and to create a two-way direct line of communication between the United Nations and the world organization of parliaments. Two major conferences of Speakers of Parliament have come to define the terms and overall objectives of this cooperation. In order to encourage transparency in the World Trade Organization, the IPU convenes once a year, together with the European Parliament, the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, which encourages parliamentary involvement in the conduct of international relations.

Peace-building

The IPU fosters political dialogue in an effort to resolve certain protracted conflicts. Over many years, the IPU has sought to promote such dialogue in Cyprus and between the Israelis and Palestinians.

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On the occasion of the 118th IPU Assembly in Cape Town, several prominent parliamentarians gave The World of Parliaments their views on the importance of commemorating the International Day of Democracy.

Different experiences should be taken into account

Although democracy is a desirable system of government, different experiences should be taken into account. Several stages have to be undergone before democracy can be achieved. Democracy is a desirable system because it gives the people the chance to participate. Participation of the people is a good thing, but it must be informed. If there is a high level of illiteracy in a country, this first stage has to be overcome in order to provide the people with the appropriate conditions for meaningful participation.

Mr. Roberto de Almeida,
Speaker of the National Assembly of Angola

MP's important role to ensure democracy

We have a very important role to ensure democracy as parliamentarians. We have a duty to do that especially for schools and other avenues, but in general to the electorate that we represent and to the international community. We had a bilateral discussion with our colleagues from Timor-Leste, one of the new IPU Members. That would demonstrate the benefit of a truly parliamentary democracy. We have a role within our regions and in the world to promote democracy in different countries and within our own country, we make parliamentarians promote democracy.

Mr. Harry Jenkins,
Speaker of the House of Representatives of Australia

Democracy needs continuity

Our return to democracy was not only celebrated in Pakistan, but also here, at the IPU Assembly and I am grateful for that. In Pakistan, the repeated intervention by the military has damaged democracy and our institutions a lot, because it is very important for any democracy to have continuity, no matter how bad the democracy is. All the institutions in Pakistan should work according to the provisions of the Constitution. It is a big challenge but now all the progressive forces are sitting in our Parliament. There is a coalition government of the two major political parties of Pakistan and I feel that this parliament, which has a will and a mandate, can strengthen the institution of parliament. With democracy and this new parliament, we plan to work very closely with our neighbours and with their parliament. Through greater interaction between parliamentarians, we can extend support to democracy and to the parliament. That can be extended to regional issues, such as the war against terrorism and the fight against poverty.

Ms. Fahmida Mirza,
Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan

Parliaments can implement democracy by putting the people at the centre

Parliaments can implement democracy by always putting the people at the centre of what it does. We have to listen to our people, we have to give our people an opportunity to have a say in the work that we do. Every step of the way, people must be at the centre. Only in that way will democracy be truly democratic. When I say people, I mean men, women, children, every citizen

who has the right to access the work of parliament because it is addressing the conditions of our people. As presiding officers, we have the role and the honour – because we must always remember that it is a privilege – to be in the forefront of determining the agenda, the best methods and the kind of resources we have to put into various activities that Parliament has been charged by any society to pursue on behalf of the people.

Ms. Baleka Mbete,
Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa

Democracy is an ideal to which we should aspire

Democracy is not only about instruments, constitutions and rules. For democracy to succeed, societies have to assimilate a democratic culture, which gives legitimacy to decisions taken. Because democracy also encompasses human rights, it must imply a state of law and freedoms. That is part of a culture in which all these values are deepened, such as respect for human rights and for one another, not to mention protecting the rights of children. Parliament must adopt democratic conduct and rules. It must to its utmost because it is in constant contact with the people. It can therefore play the role of people's representative. Democracy is an ideal to which we should aspire. It is in day-to-day conduct that democracy flourishes. It is in respect for one another. All citizens are equal before the law and they have equal opportunities.

M. Abdelwahed Radi,
former Speaker of the Moroccan Chamber of
Representatives and current Minister of Justice

Behind democracy, there is a government by the people for the people

I think that behind democracy, there is a government by the people and for the people. I think it is better than any dictatorship. In a democracy, people elect their leaders as well as their representatives. My country has 60 years' experience in democracy. It gained independence in 1947 and we have held 14 elections. We have millions of people who can cast their votes. And our parliament represents the will of those people.

Mr. Charnjit Singh Atwall,
Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha of India



HAVE A NICE DEMOCRACY ...

Drawing by Stephiff (Thailand)

