



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

## General Assembly

### Agenda item 114 (I): Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Statement by Anders B. Johnsson  
Secretary General

United Nations  
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Mr. President,

Last month, one of your illustrious predecessors as President of this General Assembly and today the Speaker of the Parliament of Namibia, Dr. Theo Ben Gurirab, was elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. He has asked me to deliver these remarks on his and the IPU's behalf and to let you know that he looks forward to working closely with you in strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

As the latest Report of the UN Secretary-General amply attests, cooperation between our two organizations over the past two years has been substantive and widespread. It has covered international peace and security, development, finance and trade, democracy, gender and human rights. I do not propose to dwell on the details of this broad agenda, but would like to highlight a few points of particular relevance for our future work together.

Two years ago the General Assembly adopted an ambitious resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union which welcomed the efforts for a greater parliamentary contribution to the work of the United Nations. It urged the IPU to play an active role in relation to the newly established UN bodies, in particular the Peacebuilding Commission, the Development Cooperation Forum and the Human Rights Council. I am pleased to report that good progress is being made on all of these fronts.

Since then, the IPU has been working closely with the Peacebuilding Commission, based on the common understanding that a key prerequisite for lasting peace is the establishment of strong institutions of good governance. From this perspective, the institution of parliament, as a forum for national reconciliation where political parties from the majority and opposition can forge a consensus on national development objectives, requires particular attention. The IPU will continue to work with the PBC, with a view to more fully engaging national parliaments in the countries under consideration by the Commission in efforts to promote democratic governance, national dialogue and reconciliation. At the risk of stating the obvious, I will add that democracy will not flourish in a country where the parliament is neglected.

The IPU is also closely following the work of the Human Rights Council, particularly as it relates to the Universal Periodic Review of the fulfillment of human rights obligations and commitments by UN member States. As I speak here today, members of parliamentary human rights bodies are meeting at the IPU headquarters in Geneva for discussions with the Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a program of action for parliamentary participation in the UPR. This is part of our work to secure deeper involvement by parliaments in the international human rights monitoring and follow-up mechanisms. It means involving members of parliament at an early stage in the drafting of the periodic country reports to be submitted to the United Nations, submitting UN conclusions and recommendations to parliament for further consideration and action, and consolidating the oversight function of parliament as it relates to the implementation of international commitments.

As far as the ECOSOC Development Cooperation Forum is concerned, the IPU has played its part in shaping its agenda and working procedures. In June we convened the parliamentary segment of a DCF Stakeholder Forum on the “Role of national and local stakeholders in contributing to aid quality and effectiveness”. Its report was introduced to the DCF during its first substantive session this July, and helped influence the outcome of the Third International Forum on Aid Effectiveness. Indeed, the Accra Agenda for Action speaks clearly about the responsibility of parliaments in helping to design national development plans, ensuring greater transparency in public financial management, and overseeing sound mutual assessment reviews.

The Secretary-General’s report offers many examples of the IPU helping to mobilize parliaments in support of the Millennium Development Goals. The newly elected IPU President, who as President of the General Assembly presided over the drafting of the Millennium Declaration, is committed to redoubling this effort. Under his leadership, the IPU will also pursue the parliamentary campaign that it launched last year to build political momentum in support of the current negotiations to address climate change.

Mr. President,

General Assembly Resolution 61/6 also called for the development, as joint UN-IPU events, of the annual parliamentary hearing at the UN and other specialized parliamentary meetings in the context of major UN conferences. Each year we hold a parliamentary meeting during the annual session the Commission on the Status of Women, seeking to mobilize parliamentary action on the main issue under consideration by the CSW. This year's High-level meeting on HIV/AIDS was accompanied by an IPU-UNDP-UNAIDS parliamentary meeting that yielded some very practical policy recommendations. This is the second year that the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations is being convened jointly by the President of the UN General Assembly and the President of the IPU. One of the subjects on our agenda for the Hearing this November is the Responsibility to Protect, on which we expect a lively and constructive exchange of views. The UN Secretary-General is recommending that the report of this hearing also be circulated as an official UN document, a proposal with which, needless to say, the IPU concurs. We very much hope that we can rely on your support as well.

Mr. President,

Last week you convened an interactive panel discussion for the General Assembly on the subject of the global financial crisis. Two weeks earlier, members of the one hundred and fifty four parliaments represented in the IPU held a similar debate on the occasion of the 119<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly. The resolution they adopted on that occasion calls for a truly global and multilateral response to a crisis which extends far beyond the world of finance. The resolution refers repeatedly to the need to ensure justice, transparency and accountability. It calls on parliaments to make sure that safeguards are in place to avoid the emergence of similar crises in the future and, more generally, invites parliaments to exercise greater democratic oversight of finance and the economy. The resolution also exhorts governments, notwithstanding the crisis, to remain vigilant in meeting international commitments to implement the MDGs and similar internationally agreed development goals. It concludes by giving us a mandate to organize, as soon as possible, a global parliamentary conference to examine the causes of the crisis and to suggest avenues for dealing with its consequences. We very much hope to be able to count on your support and cooperation when we carry this proposal forward.

Mr. President,

When you took up office as President of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly, you singled out democratization of the United Nations as one of the main themes for consideration by the General Assembly in the year ahead. We can only welcome your decision, as it is a theme to which the IPU itself has been paying considerable attention.

Two years ago, when we last addressed the General Assembly on the question of cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU, the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament had recently taken place here at UN Headquarters. The parliamentary leaders had issued a political declaration entitled "*Bridging the democracy gap in international relations*". They expressed support for UN reform, including the revitalization of the General Assembly and a more representative Security Council, and gave voice to the need to make the United Nations more democratic and accountable to the people it serves throughout the world. They suggested that cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU needs to be significantly strengthened and developed into a strategic partnership for that to happen.

As the Secretary-General's report suggests, this agenda can be advanced through a regular exchange between the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the senior leadership of the IPU with a view to building greater coherence in the work of the two organizations. However, it also needs to be placed at the forefront of your deliberations here at the United Nations. The IPU is ready to engage in such a discussion, and we invite you to join us. In his report, the Secretary-General suggests that you may wish to devote a specific agenda item to this issue. We trust that member States will be ready to support this proposal. It would be one important way in which you can advance your agenda of democratizing the United Nations.

I thank you for your attention.