



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

**Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union
Agenda item 108K of the General Assembly**

**Statement by Mr. Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General**

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Madam President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

You have before you the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and Inter-Parliamentary Union. I think you will agree that the report attests to a dynamic and substantive partnership between the two organizations.

These developments would not have been possible without the vision of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. We congratulate him for his remarkable achievements here at the United Nations.

Last year leaders of Parliaments from all over the world met here at UN Headquarters to declare their support for a strong and effective United Nations. They pledged to assist in implementing decisions taken at the United Nations by ratifying international instruments, translating these commitments into national legislation, approving the necessary budgets and exercising oversight of the executive. They also stated their wish to make the United Nations accountable to the people it serves throughout the world.

The terms of the declaration of the World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments are echoed in the World Summit Outcome, which calls for strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the IPU, with a view to furthering all aspects of the Millennium declaration and promoting United Nations reform. These points are taken up in the Secretary-General's report, and the draft resolution on cooperation between the UN and IPU echoes some of the key suggestions made in that report.

The Secretary-General welcomes the annual parliamentary hearing held at the United Nations and other specialized parliamentary meetings at major UN conferences, and calls for such joint UN-IPU events to be developed further. In fact, we are doing this already. At the 2006 Parliamentary Hearing that we are holding here in a few weeks time we will look at conflict prevention and peace-building, and the parliamentarians will be examining the Secretary-General's major report on the subject.

Over the past year, the IPU has held a series of specialized parliamentary meetings at the United Nations, designed to raise awareness among lawmakers and encourage a more coherent parliamentary contribution to some major global problems. The meetings have focused on innovative forms of financing for development, women's participation in politics, national strategies to combat HIV/AIDS, and governance in the least developed countries.

We have begun consultations with the Office of the President of the General Assembly, different UN departments and representatives of the UN membership, in order to pinpoint areas for future parliamentary action. I should add that we believe that a more coherent system of consultation between the UN and IPU needs to be developed.

The UN Secretary-General concurs with this view. In his report he invites the two organizations to consider a permanent mechanism for consultation and coordination. He goes on to suggest that ways could be explored to involve IPU more systematically in system-wide strategies for consideration by the United Nations system and the Chief Executives Board.

The IPU is anxious to give practical shape to these recommendations. During the recent discussion here on the revitalization of the General Assembly, the IPU proposed to put the annual parliamentary hearing on the agenda of the General Assembly itself. The hearing could thus serve as a political sounding board for the General Assembly on some of the larger issues on its own agenda. At the same time, it would expose members of parliament to the work of the General Assembly and enlist their support in implementing General Assembly decisions.

A few weeks ago, the IPU addressed the UN High Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) on the question of stronger cooperation between the United Nations system and national parliaments. I draw your attention to the concept note prepared by IPU for that meeting. We are ready to find ways to ensure parliamentary support for some of the major cross-cutting issues such as health, employment, environmental protection, migration, violence against children, rights of persons with disabilities and gender mainstreaming.

At the operational level, the IPU has scaled up its work in a number of areas: providing specialist knowledge on parliaments and their mandate, structure and working methods; setting standards and developing best practices for parliamentary democracy and free and fair elections; providing technical support to parliaments, including through a Global Centre for Information and Communication Technology in Parliament recently launched with UN-DESA; promoting dialogue and reconciliation, based on the unique track record of IPU in facilitating political dialogue between adversaries through parliamentary diplomacy; offering support to parliaments in the area of human rights and respect for international human rights instruments; and promoting gender equality and partnership between men and women in politics.

As the IPU develops these programs it also seeks to strengthen its cooperation with the new United Nations bodies. The IPU has developed a close working relationship with the United Nations Democracy Fund and the two organizations have just signed a cooperation agreement. Two projects submitted by IPU – one concerning work by

national parliaments in Africa in enforcing international human rights conventions, and a second in support of women's political participation in Burundi – have been approved for funding from UNDEF and will be entering the implementation phase very soon.

The IPU is also working with the United Nations Peace Building Commission. Last week, the IPU participated in the PBC session on Burundi, where it put forward a series of proposals for action in the field of good governance.

Last, but not least, the IPU is looking forward to developing a close working relationship with the new Human Rights Council. This will build on our past work with the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights which has included the publication of a series of Guides for parliamentarians on international human rights standards and convening roundtables and seminars for parliamentarians on prominent human rights issues. A handbook dedicated to the new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is currently in the making.

We have before us a unique opportunity to forge a truly strategic partnership between the United Nations and IPU, in pursuit of world peace, security, development and democratic progress. The IPU is ready to take on this challenge and we know that in order to succeed we will need the committed assistance of all of you.

Madam President,

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Mission of Italy for introducing the draft Resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as well as the many countries who are co-sponsoring this resolution. I urge all of you to adopt this important resolution today, by consensus.

Thank you.