



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement
by Senator Sergio Páez Verdugo
President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

United Nations General Assembly

Agenda item 56(J):
Cooperation between the United Nations
and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

October 21, 2004

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Inter-Parliamentary Union has been engaged in a wide-ranging programme of cooperation with the United Nations and support for its agenda for many years. This is only natural for two organisations that pursue the same objectives from their respective institutional standpoints, and each in its respective interests.

Two years ago, in recognition of its standing as the world organisation of national parliaments, this Assembly granted observer status to the IPU. Since that time, the relations between the two organisations have taken on new impetus and significance, and it is our intention to continue to build on these foundations in the future.

This is a time when the United Nations is seeking to reinforce its links with the legislative branch of government. It is not alone in seeking to do so. In fact, it is a sign of the times. Many multilateral organisations are turning to the elected representatives of the people in the hope that their informed guidance will narrow the widening democracy gap in global governance.

I shall not dwell here on the subject of the recent report published by the Panel of Eminent Persons, known as the Cardoso Panel. The matter has already been addressed in the General Assembly debate. What is more, the report is essentially about civil society, a category to which the world's legislatures do not belong. I would, however, like to set out my vision of what cooperation between the United Nations and the IPU is, and what it is destined to become.

In 2000, the Inter-Parliamentary Union mobilised the leadership of the world's parliaments for a ground-breaking conference that took place in this Assembly Hall on the eve of the Millennium Summit. The declaration that emanated from that historic gathering stressed the wish of the world's parliaments to contribute to international cooperation, with the United Nations and the IPU at its core, a point that was later acknowledged by the world's heads of State and government.

As we approach the fifth anniversary of the Millennium, the IPU is preparing once again to mobilise the Speakers and Presiding Officers of Parliaments, this time for the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, due to take place here in September 2005. I need not tell you that the year 2005 will be an important one in the history of this world organisation. The United Nations will be celebrating its sixtieth anniversary and making its first five-year review of the Millennium Declaration. It will thus be a time when it will gauge the progress made in its own reform, which is an increasingly important demand put forward by its membership.

In this context, it is important that parliamentarians should foster change and play a more dynamic and decisive role in all fields of international cooperation, in addition to supporting a multilateralism that is more dynamic and comprehensive. The Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, to be held in 2005, will be of singular importance in this respect.

In assisting the United Nations in achieving its goals, making its case and meeting its challenges, parliamentary bodies constitute a rich resource, and an invaluable institutional support. The success made so far in the fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals already owe much to them. That is why we believe that the major report on the structure and functioning of parliamentary mechanisms for multilateral cooperation that we will deliver at the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments will be both timely and valuable for the international system.

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In enunciating these broader themes, it should not be forgotten that the IPU is a practical organisation that is in touch with people's day-to-day needs. Indeed, where major enterprises of nation-building are taking place, where the United Nations is hard at work assisting countries emerging from conflicts, the IPU is playing its part. This was the case for example in Timor Leste, where we worked hard in assisting with the establishment of the new Legislative Assembly. An IPU needs assessment mission in Afghanistan will assist in a programme to consolidate the new parliament in Kabul. Another mission will take place in Amman; it will work with Iraq's Interim Assembly in preparing the ground for the Constitutional Assembly that will, God willing, be elected at the beginning of next year.

Drawing on these practical experiences, and on the work of the IPU over the years to develop the normative aspects of democracy, we are also preparing a systematic framework of criteria and good practice for addressing democracy within countries. The framework will focus specifically on representation, and hence on parliament. It will identify mechanisms for representation and the institutional practices of parliaments that allow them to operate as effective legislative and oversight institutions

Over the last two days, the Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations that traditionally brings together the members of parliament present at the General Assembly has been debating the theme of disarmament, lasting peace and post-conflict reconstruction.

Speakers of parliaments, legislators from all over the world and high-level officials from the United Nations and eminent experts representing the whole gamut of political thought are engaged in a rich and active exchange of views.

Through these multiple activities, such as those described in the United Nations Secretary-General's report on United Nations-IPU cooperation and others I have alluded to in my remarks, the IPU is bringing the parliaments to the United Nations and the United Nations to the parliaments. We have always insisted that this is a two-way relationship. For its part, the IPU mobilises those parliamentarians who have practical expertise on specific issues and helps them interact with each other and with relevant United Nations bodies. For its part, the United Nations takes action to improve understanding and knowledge of its aims and objectives, thereby making sure that parliamentarians can serve as its political arm.

I feel duty-bound to use this rostrum, Mr. President, to make known the IPU's vocation, which consists, systematically and with the necessary political resolve, in working everyday to strengthen peace processes throughout the world, promoting education in support of lasting peace and taking initiatives to ensure peaceful coexistence at the local and global levels.

This solid and concrete commitment to peace will serve as the basic priority for the world's parliaments, faithful to their humanistic principles and their fundamental values, and in keeping with the Charter of the United Nations.

Thank you.

