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Interim report by the Secretary General on the activities of the IPU since the 196th session of the Governing Council

(b) International Day for Democracy 2015

In November 2007, the United Nations General Assembly designated 15 September as the International Day of Democracy. The eighth anniversary of this Day was observed in 2015 by a large number of parliaments, governments, civil society organizations, international organizations and the IPU.

"Public Participation for Democracy" was the theme chosen by the IPU for the International Day of Democracy in 2015. The United Nations chose a related theme on "Space for Civil Society". As of 22 September 2015, a total of 19 national parliaments¹ reported having taken some action to celebrate the International Day of Democracy in 2015. In all, 105 parliaments have celebrated this Day at least once since 2008.

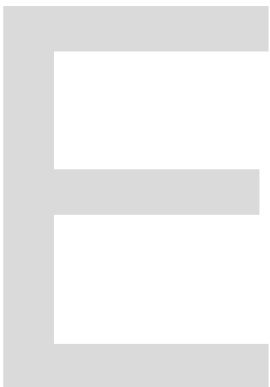
Parliaments celebrated the Day in a variety of ways. A brief description of these activities is annexed to this report. The theme of "Public Participation for Democracy" was widely used, and some parliamentary activities were carried out in partnership with the United Nations. Descriptions of parliamentary events and all the materials produced by the IPU for the Day are available at www.ipu.org/idd.

On 15 September, the IPU hosted a meeting between young people from Geneva and young parliamentarians from Lithuania, Switzerland, Tunisia and the United Arab Emirates. This meeting was one of the events during the "Democracy Week" organized by the local authorities in Geneva in cooperation with the IPU around the International Day of Democracy. As well as producing lively exchanges on ways to engage young people in politics, and to ensure that politics is attentive to the needs of young people, the meeting helped to strengthen the IPU's relationship with the local authorities and to raise the organization's profile in Geneva.

The IPU participated actively in the promotion of the Day on social media, using Twitter and Facebook to spread messages related to democracy and the Day's theme. The #DemocracyDay hashtag was used very extensively on Twitter by many organizations and people to talk about the Day, with the number of posts using the hashtag increasing from 503 in 2014 to 6479 in 2015. Relatively few parliaments tweeted about the Day, and not all always use the #DemocracyDay hashtag. This suggests that there is a need to build more awareness about the Day among parliaments, in order to have more effective online outreach to citizens.

The IPU issued a press release on the Day's theme that got good pick-up, and several interviews were conducted with international and local media.

¹ Andorra, Bahrain, Cameroon, Chile, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Germany, India, Myanmar, Namibia, Pakistan, Peru, Sweden, Togo, Tonga, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Uruguay.



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Andorra	<p>On 21 September, the Andorran Parliament will celebrate International Day of Democracy by holding a guided tour of the country's new parliament building and a roundtable about senior citizens and their participation in democracy.</p> <p>On 15 September, Parliament highlighted Democracy Day through its website (www.consellgeneral.ad) and via the media.</p>
Bahrain	<p>In the Kingdom of Bahrain, Parliament Speaker Ahmed bin Ibrahim Al-Mulla marked International Day of Democracy, stating that the democratic process pursued by Bahrain since the launch of the royal reform has contributed to promoting the country's international standing.</p> <p>He added that democratic steps adopted by Bahrain regarding political and civil society institutions has paved the way for building partnership and respect for human rights and freedoms. The Speaker extended congratulations to HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, HRH Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa and HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister, and the people of Bahrain.</p>
Cameroon	<p>The National Assembly of Cameroon celebrated Democracy Day with an event on "Democracy and Citizenship". It was held in the Chamber of the Glass Palace Ngoa-Ekellé in Yaoundé, and was chaired by the President of the National Assembly, Djibril Cavaye Yeguié. The Prime Minister, Head of Government, Philemon Yang, cabinet members, ambassadors, political party representatives, media representatives, political science academics and students were in attendance.</p>
Chile	<p>In Chile, Marco Antonio Núñez (PPD) – President of the Chamber of Deputies – made a statement highlighting the importance of Democracy Day and this year's IPU theme of public participation for democracy. He stressed the need to continually strengthen democracy, and said that the day was a time to reflect on action both to expand and deepen democracy in Chile and to ensure that it is valued by the people. He highlighted the important role of parliament, and said that strengthening democracy is crucial as the best system for peacefully resolving conflicts.</p>
Fiji	<p>International Day of Democracy will be marked in Fiji with a panel discussion at the Big Committee Room, Parliament House at 5.30p.m. on 15 September. Panellists include Speaker of Parliament Dr. Jiko Luveni; British High Commissioner Roderick I. Drummond; Head of the EU Delegation for the Pacific Ambassador Andrew Jacobs; Chief Executive Officer, Citizen's Constitutional Forum Sara Bulutani Mataitawakilai; Director, Fiji Women's Rights Movement Tara Chetty; and coordinator of the Leadership, Governance and Human Rights Program, USP Natasha Khan.</p> <p>Speaker of Parliament Dr. Luveni commended the role of civil society in Fiji. The Speaker was quoted in media reports as saying that the role of civil society is vital in having a truly effective democracy, and that Parliament will continue to strive to uphold and promote the ideals of democracy and facilitate more space so that the voice of Fijians can be heard.</p>
Finland	<p>The Parliament of Finland and Demo Finland (Political Parties of Finland for Democracy) are organizing a seminar, "Dialogue as a means of reconciliation", on International Day of Democracy. The event – from 8.30 a.m. -12.45 p.m. at the Auditorium, Annex of the Parliament in Helsinki – marks the 10th anniversary of Demo Finland, which is a co-operative organization of Finnish parliamentary parties.</p> <p>Opening remarks will be by Ms. Maria Lohela, Speaker of the Parliament (Finns), and keynote speeches will be delivered by Dr. Richard Youngs of Carnegie Europe and University of Warwick, and Ms. Lenita Toivakka, Minister for International Trade and Development (National Coalition Party). These will be followed by panel discussions.</p>

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Georgia	<p>On 14-15 September in Tbilisi, the Parliament of Georgia will host a meeting of the Open Government Partnership's Legislative Openness Working Group, which is chaired by the Congress of Chile and the National Democratic Institute. The meeting will feature a focused group of legislators, legislative staff, and civil society representatives to share experiences advancing legislative openness and explore ways in which the Open Government Partnership can be most effectively leveraged to advance public access to legislative information and processes.</p>
Germany	<p>On 6 September 2015, there will be an open day at the German Bundestag. The public will be invited to visit the Reichstag building and other premises of parliament. This will be a good opportunity for citizens to get in touch with MPs, many of whom are expected to be present for answering questions. Most divisions of the parliamentary administration will also be present to engage with citizens and inform them about their activities – including the International Parliamentary Assemblies Division, to which the secretariat of the German delegation to IPU belongs. Visitors will also be able to find out more about IPU and its activities, as well as International Day of Democracy.</p>
India	<p>The Parliament of India is to commemorate International Day of Democracy on 15 September. On the same day, Lok Sabha Television (LSTV) will broadcast a play, 'Raj Yogini Matoshree Ahilya Bai'. Also on Democracy Day, the Rajbhasha Prabhag (Department of Official Language), Lok Sabha Secretariat will organize a write-up competition on the subject of 'People's responsibility in a democracy' ('Loktantra Mein Janata Ka Daayitva'). Members of Parliament, members of the Secretariat and their family members will take part in the competition.</p>
Myanmar	<p>International Day of Democracy was celebrated in Nay Pyi Taw, with an event in Parliament attended by Union Parliament Speaker Thura Shwe Mann, opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and government officials. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon sent a message to the event which was attended by representatives from UN agencies, about 20 political parties, civil society organizations and students.</p> <p>The Myanmar government will make all efforts to ensure that the forthcoming 8 November general election will be free and fair, said Myanmar President U Thein Sein said in a message delivered to mark International Day of Democracy.</p>
Pakistan	<p>For the first time, Democracy Day was commemorated in Pakistan's Senate. Lawmakers in the upper house of parliament debated concerns over a perceived disconnect in civil-military relations.</p>
Peru	<p>Peru's Congress of the Republic has planned several events marking International Day of Democracy Day.</p> <p>All citizens are being invited to a 'Democracy for All' event at Lima's Plaza Bolívar on 14 September. This event will involve political parties, parliamentary groups, state institutions and civil society organizations.</p> <p>On 15 September, a conference – "Democracy in Latin America and in Peru" – will be held. Guests will include María del Carmen Sacasa Ventura (UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Peru); Iguñiz Javier Echevarria (Executive Secretary of the National Accord); and Percy Medina Masias (Head of Mission for Peru International Idea).</p> <p>Also on 15 September, a "Democracy in Peru" roundtable will include a number of panellists from the Congress of the Republic.</p>
Sweden	<p>On 16 September, International IDEA will hold a large event in the Swedish Parliament with prominent guests – including the Swedish Crown Princess and former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan – being invited to celebrate IDEA's 20 years as an organization.</p> <p>On 23 September, the Swedish IPU-delegation is organizing a seminar in the Parliament about countering violent terrorism, gender equality, ISIS/ international terrorism and preventive work. Mr. Hans Brun from the Swedish Defence College,</p>

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	<p>who is Sweden's leading authority on international terrorism, will participate, alongside Ms. Mona Sahlin, former party leader of Sweden's largest political party, the Social Democrats, and also National Coordinator for efforts to counter violent extremism.</p>
Togo	<p>A brainstorming meeting was held in Togo's parliamentary chamber to mark International Day of Democracy. The President of the National Assembly, Dama Dramani, highlighted issues about the operation of the Togolese National Assembly and how people view the institution, and how connections between the people and parliament could be strengthened. The meeting – themed on "Democracy and Citizenship" – was attended by 130 members, traditional leaders and leaders of civil society organizations.</p>
Tonga	<p>Citizens in Tonga will gather on Democracy Day for a day of workshops, discussions and presentations, focused on 'Making Space for Women' in the country's democratic institutions.</p> <p>The activities will highlight the need for equitable participation by women in national and local elections, and in public affairs. The day will help prepare women to run as candidates in Tonga's 2016 local elections for district and town officers. The events are being organized by Tonga's Ministry of Internal Affairs, UNDP's Tonga Governance Strengthening Programme and civil society groups.</p>
United Arab Emirates	<p>The United Arab Emirates' Federal National Council (FNC) made a statement to mark Democracy Day, commending the approach followed by the country's leadership to enhance parliamentary life – part of the political empowerment programme of His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE and Ruler of Abu Dhabi. The FNC said that the President's programme is aimed at promoting and consolidating the UAE's approach to democracy.</p>
United Kingdom	<p>The Executive Committees of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK are hosting a reception to mark International Day of Democracy on 15 September 2015. The event will present an opportunity to find out more about the importance of inter-parliamentary dialogue in advancing parliamentary democracy globally, and the ways in which parliamentarians can become involved in both organizations' activities.</p>
Uruguay	<p>In Uruguay, the parliamentary group of IPU commemorated International Day of Democracy by sharing IPU's press release amongst members of parliament.</p> <p>Together with the Library of the Legislature, the IPU group is also marking Democracy Day by organizing an event – "30 Years Democracy: Parliament and the Press" – on 30 September at 17.00 hours. This will include the screening of a film featuring a brief summary of the past three decades. The opening will be led by Vice President Lic. Raul Sendic, and Director of the Library of the Legislature, Esc. Rafael Andrade Benoit. Political scientist Dr. Daniel Chasquetti will moderate the event, and panellists are to include journalists, Jorge Burel, Dr. Juan Carlos Otormin, and Lic. Daniel Lema.</p> <p>From 30 September 30 to 2 October 2015, in the Central Hall of the Library, an exhibition of newspapers will highlight events that have shaped Uruguay's democracy over the past 30 years.</p>