

# Cooperation with the United Nations System

## List of activities undertaken by the IPU from 15 March to 15 September 2016

*Noted by the IPU Governing Council at its 199<sup>th</sup> session  
(Geneva, 27 October 2016)*

### Democracy and human rights

Work on the second edition of the flagship **Global Parliamentary Report** continued on schedule. The Report is jointly produced by the IPU and UNDP. Publication is expected around the turn of the year. A detailed outline was agreed and a team of writers was assembled. UNDP organized national focus groups to contribute to the report.

The **World e-Parliament Conference** took place from 28 to 30 June in Valparaíso, Chile. It was organized by the IPU and the Chamber of Deputies of Chile in partnership with UNDP, the National Democratic Institute and others. The fourth World e-Parliament Report was launched at the Conference.

UNDP and the IPU continued their joint project of **assistance to parliaments** in Afghanistan and Myanmar. The partnership facilitated a draft parliamentary service Act for Afghanistan in May 2016. Following historic elections in Myanmar in November 2016, the IPU–UNDP partnership supported induction programmes for over 700 national, regional and state MPs. The IPU and UNDP are also in discussions about a project to support the Tunisian Parliament.

On 22 June, the IPU and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) organized a panel discussion to take stock of the contribution of parliaments to the work of the **Human Rights Council** and its **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**. Parliamentarians from Ecuador, the Philippines and Morocco addressed the meeting, which coincided with the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council. Discussions concluded with concrete recommendations about how parliaments and the Human Rights Council could work more closely together to their mutual benefit.

The IPU maintained **regular contact with OHCHR**, including with its country offices, in order to promote satisfactory settlements in cases before the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

The IPU participated in the **high-level meeting on human rights** convened by the President of the UN General Assembly on 12 and 13 July. During the main session of the meeting, the IPU delivered an address. It reflected on the role of parliaments in the UPR and on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a human rights perspective.

In April, the IPU delivered a statement at the **special session of the UN General Assembly on the world drug problem (UNGASS 2016)**. The statement captured the key messages of the 2016 Parliamentary Hearing, which was devoted to the same issue. It also emphasized the need to look at the drug problem from a human rights and health perspective.

The theme of the **UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law**, to be held in November 2016, will be *Widening the Democratic Space: The role of youth in public decision-making*. The IPU is discussing with OHCHR organizers how best to work together, and has answered the Forum's call for input by submitting documentation and key messages. The IPU also participated in a side event at the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council on the theme of the forthcoming Forum.

The IPU and OHCHR have jointly produced a **revised version of the human rights handbook for parliamentarians**, which has been very successful over the years. Similar work is underway with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the revised version of the refugee protection handbook.

On 25 and 26 May, a regional seminar took place in Abuja, Nigeria, on combating **child trafficking and child labour** in the context of South-South and triangular cooperation. The seminar was organized by the IPU, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Parliament of the Economic Community of Western African States (ECOWAS); it was supported by UNICEF.

A member of the IPU Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL), represented the IPU at the **World Humanitarian Summit** that took place in Istanbul, Turkey, on 23 and 24 May. Her statement before the plenary expressed support for the objectives of the Summit, and recalled the role of parliaments in carrying forward those objectives. She also spoke at a special session on migration.

In June 2016, the IPU's IHL Committee conducted a mission to Lebanon, supported by UNHCR. The aim was to assess the situation of Syrian **refugees** in the country and the impact of their presence on their hosts. IHL Committee members met refugees and held meetings with Lebanese government and parliamentary authorities, as well as with organizations in the field that were providing assistance. A similar mission is due to be conducted in Greece.

### **Gender equality and youth empowerment**

UN Women and the IPU developed a joint work programme on discriminatory laws and are currently seeking funding. UNDP and UN Women also approached the IPU to develop a **joint project on Security Council resolution 1325**, on the role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, and in post-conflict reconstruction. A first draft project for joint action has been developed. Its implementation will depend on fundraising.

The IPU took part in the 64<sup>th</sup> session of the **review of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**. It presented a report on women in parliament and on the involvement of parliaments in the CEDAW reporting process. The IPU–CEDAW working group also met to discuss ways to enhance cooperation and to further the engagement of MPs in implementing the Convention. A side event during the 65<sup>th</sup> session is planned. The session will take place in October 2016 in Geneva.

The IPU held consultations with the **UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth**, Mr. A. Alhendawi, on opportunities for future cooperation. Future regional activities on youth-related issues were also discussed with UNDP Asia-Pacific. This work followed up on the 2016 Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians and the Lusaka Assembly general debate, *Rejuvenating democracy, giving voice to youth*.

### **Sustainable development**

The IPU and the Romanian Parliament jointly organized a **Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe** (18–19 April). Participants included representatives of the UN Environment Programme, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, UNDP and UNESCO. The outcome document urged parliaments to ensure they have appropriate laws to protect the environment and sufficient funding allocated for measures to prevent natural disasters and reduce the impact of climate change, especially in the most marginalized areas. It also underscored the importance of education for sustainable development in shaping the next generation of citizens and leaders.

The IPU contributed to the first **high-level political forum on sustainable development** since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Forty parliamentarians participated in various sessions of the forum from 11 to 20 July. A parliamentary meeting was held on 18 July as part of the official programme of side events. The meeting, moderated by the IPU Secretary General, featured a panel of parliamentarians and the Director of the UN SDGs Action Campaign. Discussions highlighted a number of initiatives to help institutionalize the SDGs in parliaments. The IPU statement to the forum's general debate outlined how the IPU plans to advance the SDGs in the years ahead.

Before the high-level political forum, the IPU conducted a **survey of parliaments in 22 countries** that had volunteered to present progress reports to the forum. The survey queried parliaments on how they were involved in government-led reviews.

The IPU and UNDP held discussions on possible cooperation around the IPU **parliamentary self-assessment toolkit** (forthcoming) to help mainstream the SDGs in parliaments. Cooperation may include UNDP support to pilot the toolkit in a number of countries.

On 21 and 22 July, members of parliament also participated in the biannual session of the **Development Cooperation Forum of ECOSOC**. The Forum advances key questions of development cooperation, which is critical to the implementation of the SDGs. Before the Forum, held on 14 and 15 July, the IPU Secretary General participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Steering Committee of the **Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation** (GPEDC) on which he represents the parliamentary constituency. The GPEDC plays an important role in the implementation of development cooperation commitments. The second high-level meeting (HLM2) of the GPEDC is to take place in Kenya in November 2016. The IPU has begun preparations for a parliamentary contribution to the meeting, including through a one-day parliamentary forum. As a member of the Steering Committee, the IPU contributed to the HLM2 draft outcome document and to the future organization of the GPEDC.

The 2016 Annual Session of the **Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization (WTO)** took place on 13 and 14 June in Geneva. The Conference's overall aim is to provide a parliamentary dimension to WTO work. The overarching theme of this year's session was *What future for the WTO?* It allowed for a substantive exchange of opinions, information and experience. The exchanges were designed to promote parliamentary action on international trade issues, which is one of the ways of implementing the SDGs.

IPU representatives spoke at a number of **development-related meetings** of the UN, including: the launch of a new report on financing the UN development system and a panel of the high-level political forum on sustainable development that discussed the role of local authorities in implementing the 2030 Agenda.

The IPU participated in the General Assembly's **High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS** on 8–10 June. The meeting concluded with a declaration of commitments, which included strong references to the role of parliaments and the IPU in helping to end the epidemic by 2030. Similar acknowledgements were made in the Secretary-General's report to the meeting. A joint UNAIDS–IPU side event was held for parliamentarians attending. The IPU statement to the Meeting drew from the conclusions of the joint side event and expressed the IPU's commitment to future action on HIV/AIDS.

The first ever parliamentary side event at the **World Health Assembly** was held on 25 May in Geneva. The event was entitled *Parliaments as key actors in ensuring access to health for all* and gave parliamentarians an opportunity to contribute to the global health agenda. The IPU Secretary General delivered an address to the main session of the Assembly.

The IPU President was invited by the UN Secretary-General to join his **High-level Advisory Group for Every Woman Every Child**, established to advise the Secretary-General on his Strategy to promote women's, children's and adolescents' health. The group will review progress and challenges, and provide recommendations on issues such as financing, accountability, cross-sectoral action and country-level implementation of the Strategy.

The UN Secretary-General also invited the IPU Secretary General to join his **Lead Group of the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN)**. The Group's mandate is to provide leadership and strategic oversight for the SUN Movement. In that capacity, the IPU Secretary General participated in a high-level event convened in New York during the High-level Political Forum, to discuss the contribution of the SUN Movement to the success of the SDGs.

### **International peace and security**

From 20 to 22 June, the President of the IPU Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, Ms. L. Rojas, led a parliamentary delegation to the **comprehensive review of the status of implementation of resolution 1540**. The resolution aims to prevent non-State actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. She delivered a statement on how parliaments could engage on this issue.

The President of the IPU Standing Committee also represented the IPU at the **annual session of the Peacebuilding Commission** that took place in New York on 23 June. Her address noted that parliaments should be better integrated into the Commission's work, UN efforts towards conflict prevention and resolution, and managing transitions to political stability.

The IPU continued its engagement with the UN, including its **Office on Drugs and Crime, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate** and other partners, with a view to advancing a more structured parliamentary strategy supported by the IPU in order to combat terrorism and violent extremism.

The IPU coordinated with the UN Office at Geneva and other partner organizations with a view to contributing to **Geneva Peace Week 2016**. In November, the IPU is due to sponsor a panel discussion on *When Peace agreements fail to secure sustainable peace: Learning from Yemen, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka*, as well as a joint session entitled *Inequality as a danger to sustainable peace: Converging perspectives on human rights and peacebuilding*.

### **Senior-level interaction**

On 22 April, the **IPU President** participated in a special event convened by the UN Secretary-General in New York to mark the signing of the Paris Agreement on climate change by representatives of more than 170 Member States.

A new **Cooperation Agreement** between the UN and the IPU was signed by the respective Secretaries General on 21 July. The agreement takes stock of developments since the first agreement of 1996 and aims to place the institutional relationship on a stronger and more strategic footing. Following the signing of the agreement, the two Secretaries General held consultations, with a view to identifying and confirming priority areas for joint work in the context of the major challenges facing the world.

On 25 July, the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus the resolution ***Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU***. Seventy-seven Member States sponsored the resolution, following four consultations held over the course of the summer facilitated by the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh as the country holding the IPU presidency. The resolution opens the door to new areas of cooperation between the two organizations, from the implementation of the SDGs to disarmament, South-South cooperation and migration. The IPU President delivered an address to the general debate, as did eight others, including the Speaker of the Beninese National Assembly and the President of the IPU Geopolitical Group for Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC).

Further to a recommendation of the IPU Standing Committee on UN Affairs, the IPU invited the **candidates for the post of UN Secretary-General** to answer a short questionnaire on how they see the relationship between the United Nations and the IPU. All candidates responded and their answers were posted on the IPU website.

The IPU Secretary General met the **President of the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the UN General Assembly**, Ambassador Peter Thomson (Fiji), to discuss the Ambassador's priorities for the new session, which starts in September 2016. Preparations will soon begin for the 2017 joint Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, expected to take place in the first semester of the new year.

The IPU Secretary General maintained contact with **the heads of UN agencies based in Geneva**, including the Director-General of the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG), in order to foster coordination and cooperation between the IPU and the UN community. He attended several working sessions convened by the Director-General for that purpose. He briefed the Geneva-based ambassadors on the IPU's work to promote the new development agenda at a meeting convened by the UNOG Director-General.