



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

CL/201/SR.1
6 December 2017

Summary records of the Governing Council

201st session

15 and 18 October 2017

**Tavrishesky Palace (*Dumsky Hall*),
St. Petersburg (Russian Federation).**

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First sitting

Sunday, 15 October 2017

The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m., with Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in the Chair.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND PROPOSALS FOR THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 137th ASSEMBLY (CL/201/A.1)

The revised provisional agenda (CL/201/A.1) was adopted.

At the proposal of Ms. A. Alqubaisi (United Arab Emirates), seconded by Mr. F. Pinedo (Argentina), the Council decided to recommend to the 137th IPU Assembly that it elect Ms. Valentina Matvienko (Russian Federation) as its President.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 200th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (CL/200/SR.1)

The summary records of the 200th session of the Governing Council (CL/200/SR.1) held in Dhaka in April 2017 were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP AND THE SITUATION OF CERTAIN PARLIAMENTS

(a) Requests for affiliation and reaffiliation to the IPU (CL/201/3(a)-P.1 and P.2)

The President, drawing attention to the three decisions set out in document CL/201/3(a)-P.1 in favour of requests for affiliation submitted by the Parliaments of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vanuatu, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve those decisions, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Ms. A. Nurberdiyeva (Turkmenistan) welcomed the decision to admit her Parliament as a Member of the IPU, saying that it would strive to fulfil its obligations in that capacity and to contribute constructively to IPU activities, to which it attached great importance. As the largest and most representative platform for parliamentary diplomacy, the IPU provided opportunities for close interaction with other parliamentarians. Her Parliament would therefore do its utmost to benefit from the opportunities thus provided, for engaging in collective efforts to resolve pressing topical issues, promoting international peace and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan) said that his Parliament was gratified to be admitted to the IPU membership, noting in that context the ever-growing stature of the global role played by the world's many parliaments. Of the numerous international parliamentary organizations in existence, the IPU was the most authoritative and served as an important forum for parliamentary dialogue in pursuit of improved international relations and global peace. His Parliament was set to engage fully in IPU activities and prove itself worthy of its membership.

The President, extending a warm welcome to the new Members, said that the IPU family continued to grow at an impressive pace. With the addition of the three new Members, the current IPU membership now stood at 176, which was a great incentive for all to continue the concerted efforts towards achieving the goal of universal membership.

Further drawing attention to a recommendation also set out in document CL/201/3(a)-P.1 in favour of a request for associate membership submitted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Cooperation (PABSEC), he said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve that recommendation by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Mr. R. Can (PABSEC), welcoming the Council's decision, said that the Black Sea region represented by the 12 PABSEC member parliaments was a crossroads of global significance on account of its transport infrastructure and wealth of energy resources. Its most valuable asset, however, resided in its cultures and its peoples, who exemplified diversity and tolerance. PABSEC looked forward to the wide opportunities that its new associate membership status would provide for enhancing cooperation and relationships with other parliamentary assemblies and indeed parliaments.

The President added in conclusion that delegations from the Marshall Islands and Saint Lucia were attending the current Assembly as observers with a view to future affiliation to the IPU; he looked forward to welcoming them into the IPU fold. It would be helpful for participants to share their experiences of IPU membership with those delegations.

(b) Achieving universal membership
(CL/201/3(b)-P.1)

The President, recalling the IPU aspiration to achieve universal membership, drew attention to document CL/201/3(b)-P.1, saying that it contained proposals for new modalities that would enable the IPU to retain the membership of defaulting parliaments while suspending their rights.

The Secretary General, elaborating further on those proposals, said that they had been inspired by the practice followed in other international organizations, including the United Nations, and would involve creating a new category of non-participating Members. To that end, the Executive Committee had recommended that the IPU Secretariat should proceed by drafting the required amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules for consideration and possible adoption by the Council at its 202nd session in Geneva. The more flexible approach based on the principles articulated in the document was designed to preclude the potential budgetary consequences of the automatic suspension of Members in arrears, often for reasons beyond their control, by instead working with them to encourage payment of their assessed contributions.

The President invited the Council to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) said that implementation of the suggested approach could be complicated and give rise to other difficulties, bearing in mind that the core budget of the IPU was dependent on the payment of assessed contributions. He suggested that an approach that was easy to understand should be put in place.

Mr. R. León Ramírez (Chile) wondered how the proposed modalities might be applied in situations such as that in Venezuela, where the Government had recently stripped the elected opposition-led Parliament of its powers. He stressed that decisions about participation rights must be based on information provided by the parliaments concerned. He requested clarity on the interpretation of the proposed approach.

The President replied that any amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules would be clearly drafted to ensure that there was no room for confusion or misinterpretation.

The Secretary General said that concerns raised would be taken into account in drafting those amendments but noted that a parliament that ceased to exist could not realistically participate in IPU activities. Furthermore, the reasons for non-payment of assessed contributions were sometimes compelling, which justified the introduction of some flexibility for allowing related decisions to be taken on a case-by-case basis.

Mr. R. León Ramírez (Chile), supported by **Mr. N. Lammert (Germany)**, said that the interpretation of the new approach could be dangerous for Members and decisions to restrict the participation rights of parliaments facing certain types of difficulty would simply weaken their position and therefore be at odds with the IPU's role of protecting parliaments and parliamentarians, such as in the case of Venezuela.

The President, echoed by **the Secretary General**, said it was clear that, pursuant to the IPU Statutes, the dissolution of a parliament led to the suspension of its IPU membership. Equally clear, however, was the fact that the IPU upheld the core principle of parliamentary solidarity, as demonstrated by its recognition of the Venezuelan National Assembly.

Mr. I. Ahmed Omer (Sudan), supported by **a delegate from Kuwait**, said that considerable thought should be given to the modalities for addressing the situation of parliaments facing potentially lengthy difficulties in paying their assessed contributions, as to deny such parliaments the right to participate in IPU activities would simply exacerbate their situation in general.

The President, supported by **Mr. I. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom)**, said that the IPU must abide strictly by the rules in place concerning the payment of assessed contributions, without which it would be difficult, if not impossible, for it to carry out its activities. The proposed new approach would, however, allow some flexibility and enable the IPU to engage through dialogue with Members in arrears, including with support from the geopolitical groups, in order to determine their circumstances.

The Secretary General added for clarification that, if the proposed approach were to receive approval, it was only those clauses of the Statutes relating to the non-payment of assessed contributions for three or more years that would require amendment. Any other amendments that Members wished to see introduced on the basis of demonstrating solidarity with parliaments that were unconstitutionally dissolved were another issue that would require further discussion.

The President said it was indeed a fundamental issue that had been raised. The assumption was that Members subscribed to the standards and ideals of the IPU, in which case they could not at the same time cite their domestic law as justification for abuses of the human rights of parliamentarians. He suggested that the issue could perhaps be taken on board by developing a new set of principles for consideration by the Council and proposing necessary amendments to the Statutes accordingly once those principles had been approved.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) stressed that the number of Members in arrears had decreased over the years, thanks to dedicated IPU efforts that must not go in vain, especially in view of the vital need for certainty over the IPU's core budget. The amendment proposed should not have the opposite effect of increasing the number of parliaments in default.

The President said that, in the light of the discussion, he took it that the Council wished to request the Secretariat accordingly to review the proposed approach relating to non-payment issues, including by also taking into account the case of parliaments dissolved through unconstitutional measures, and present the outcome of its work to the Council for consideration at its next session in Geneva.

It was so decided.

(c) Situation of certain parliaments

The Secretary General, reporting on the situation of certain Members and additionally communicating the related decisions recommended by the Executive Committee for approval by the Council, began by saying that in the first of the cases under review, namely Burundi, the situation remained worrisome in the ongoing absence of any agreement among the parties involved in the crisis. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the Council should remain seized of the matter and reaffirm the IPU's earlier offer to serve as a forum for mediation and inclusive dialogue aimed at a political solution for peace.

Mr. P. Nyabenda (Burundi) said that, on the contrary, the situation in Burundi was progressing well. An inter-Burundian dialogue was taking place, assisted by a facilitator, meaning that any call for mediated negotiations was redundant, particularly as all exiles and others having fled the country had returned. He suggested that the Executive Committee should dispatch a mission to Burundi in order to ascertain the true facts and formulate its recommendations accordingly.

The Secretary General thanked the speaker for his comments, saying that the IPU would continue seeking to obtain as much information as possible by engaging with the Burundian authorities and consulting with other relevant stakeholders, including the United Nations system.

Concerning Cambodia, reports of human rights violations and victimization of opposition members of parliament persisted. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the IPU should continue to engage with the Cambodian authorities in the interest of promoting an enabling

environment for the conduct of free and fair elections in 2018, as scheduled. He added that the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians would also report to the Council at its next sitting on the cases it was examining in Cambodia.

Mr. N. Tep (Cambodia) said that the situation in his country was not as described in the foreign press but normal, adding that only Cambodians who had committed crimes were sentenced to imprisonment. Cambodian problems must be resolved by the Cambodian people alone and not by foreigners, including some IPU Members, who encouraged the opposition party to rise against the Government.

The President said that the IPU would welcome further information from the Cambodian delegation about the restrictions allegedly imposed on the activities of Cambodian opposition party members. He added that the IPU sought to promote dialogue with the authorities in order to clarify allegations. In that context, he asked why Ms. S. Tioulong, President of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade, had not been included as a member of the Cambodian delegation to the present Assembly and, furthermore, why she could not be traced.

Mr. N. Tep (Cambodia) said that Ms. Tioulong had apparently been away from Cambodia for some time. Attempts by the President of the Cambodian National Assembly to locate her had proved unsuccessful, prompting the decision to send another delegate to the Assembly in her place, especially as she had not, in any event, been attending to her parliamentary duties.

The President responded that, as the President of an IPU Standing Committee, Ms. Tioulong was obliged to participate in the Assembly and should therefore have been listed as a member of the Cambodian delegation from the outset, regardless of her whereabouts. The IPU would be seeking further clarity on the matter from the delegation.

The Secretary General, turning to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recalled that the political agreement signed in that country in 2016 provided for the conduct of elections in 2017 and the establishment of a consensual government. The recent appointment of a new prime minister had been divisive, however, and uncertainty reigned over the elections, with the authorities contending that conditions for holding them were not yet ripe. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the IPU should continue to urge the country's authorities to implement the agreement and organize the scheduled elections in the interest of ensuring a return to stability.

In the case of Eritrea, little information was available, which was hardly reassuring in the light of reports before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians concerning the imprisonment and killing of parliamentarians. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the IPU should remain seized of the situation.

As to the situation in the Gambia, recent positive developments had culminated in the establishment of a full-fledged parliament, as provided for in the country's Constitution. The Executive Committee consequently recommended that the country should be removed from the IPU list of parliaments being monitored.

In Guinea-Bissau, the parliament had not functioned normally since 2014 owing to a variety of reasons, including in-fighting within the ruling party and confrontation between the Speaker and the President of the Republic. The IPU had responded to the Speaker's request for it to mediate in the crisis and was awaiting formal confirmation that its offer had been accepted. In that event, the Executive Committee recommended that the IPU should pursue its mediation efforts and subsequently report to the Council on progress achieved.

Concerning Libya, he recalled that, of the two existing parliaments in that country, the IPU joined the international community in recognizing the parliament based in Tobruk, as opposed to the one based in Tripoli. A roadmap for ending the stalemate through a mutually acceptable solution had recently been launched by the United Nations. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the IPU should continue to engage with the Tobruk-based parliament and monitor the situation.

With regard to the Maldives, the IPU continued to engage in dialogue with all political parties with a view to obtaining a balanced picture of the worrying situation; the Parliament was apparently under siege, its Speaker had been threatened with impeachment and efforts were being made to incapacitate the opposition, including by imprisoning some of its members on various charges, before the next parliamentary and presidential elections. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation and to engage with all sides in the interest of achieving fair and equitable political processes reflecting the will of the people. He added that the IPU had successfully argued for the release of an opposition member on humanitarian grounds, which it saw as a positive sign.

The President said that the Maldives was indeed in a critical situation and that he would meet with the Maldivian delegation during the Assembly.

As to the situation in the Philippines, the **Secretary General** said the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians would report to the Council at its next sitting on its recent mission to the country as part of its active investigation into the case of imprisoned female senator Ms. De Lima. The IPU view was that, in the absence of conclusive evidence of wrongdoing, Ms. De Lima should continue to fulfil her parliamentary responsibilities. The Executive Committee recommended that the IPU should continue to monitor developments in the situation.

In South Sudan, the IPU would endeavour to play a role in the United Nations efforts to resolve the ongoing bloody conflict. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should take note of the troubling situation and continue to monitor developments.

Concerning the Syrian Arab Republic, the **Secretary General** recalled the establishment of the Working Group on Syria at the 136th Assembly with the aim of providing key IPU political input towards resolving the conflict in that country and envisaging the post-conflict scenario from the institutional perspective. In Geneva, the Working Group had recently met with, among other relevant stakeholders, the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Syria, who had confirmed the opportunity for the IPU to assist in de-escalating the crisis. The Executive Committee had thus approved the plan of action developed to that end by the Working Group, which was also planning a mission to the Syrian Arab Republic to assess the situation on the ground. The Committee's recommendation was that the IPU should continue to engage actively with the situation through the Working Group, including by maintaining its support for the Group's activities.

The President, commending those activities, said that the Executive Committee was indeed doing its utmost, through the Working Group, to play a positive part in identifying the way forward in the protracted Syrian conflict, especially at the current crucial stage in which an end seemed nigh.

Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation), Chair of the Working Group on Syria, expressed thanks to the IPU Secretariat for its excellent practical assistance to the Group, which he said looked forward to bilateral meetings during the current Assembly with delegations from parliaments in the region in order to update them on the Group's work, obtain relevant information and hear their views concerning the way forward. The current situation in the country could offer the IPU the possibility to contribute, including by promoting dialogue between the different parties. The Group espoused the principle of neutrality in working with stakeholders in pursuit of a political process based on relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 2254 (2015), as the only means of resolving the Syrian conflict.

The President said that, in striving to achieve its complex task, the Working Group could be assured of the full support of the IPU membership.

Mr. H. Sabbagh (Syrian Arab Republic) expressed the commitment of his Parliament to cooperation with the Working Group.

The Secretary General, resuming his report, said with respect to the situation in Thailand that the IPU had successfully engaged with the country's transitional parliament in order to produce a roadmap for the conduct of elections aimed at restoring the country to constitutional normalcy. The new Constitution had been promulgated and elections were accordingly expected to take place during the second half of 2018. The Executive Committee recommended that the IPU should continue to encourage progress towards that objective, in which context he added that the Thai authorities were working on institutional reforms and development plans.

Concerning Turkey, the IPU had expressed deep concern at some of the extraordinary measures to which Turkish parliamentarians and officials had been subjected in the wake of the attempted coup in 2016. Indeed, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was examining numerous cases on which it would report at the next sitting of the Council. The Executive Committee recommended that the IPU should remain seized of the situation and express solidarity with Turkish parliamentarians in hoping for a speedy and satisfactory resolution of the situation.

As to Venezuela, the IPU had stressed the need for parliamentary solidarity in the face of the ever-worsening situation in which the Venezuelan Government and judiciary were reportedly restricting the elected Parliament in the performance of its duties and innocent protesters were being killed. The IPU had issued strong statements in support of that Parliament and was seeking to verify claims that the President of the National Assembly had either been prevented from

travelling to the current Assembly or had remained in Venezuela for fear that his return would be hampered or that his passport would be invalidated. The Executive Committee recommended that the IPU should remain seized of the situation and continue to promote parliamentary solidarity with the aim of ensuring that the Venezuelan National Assembly was able to function unimpeded.

The President, emphasizing that the IPU indeed stood firmly in such worrying circumstances alongside the Venezuelan Parliament and people, said it was deeply disappointing that the IPU's planned mission to Venezuela had not taken place. He expressed the IPU's solidarity with the people and National Assembly of Venezuela.

The Secretary General, turning to the situation in war-torn Yemen, recalled that the country had held no parliamentary elections since 2003 and that the Council had decided at the 136th Assembly to freeze Yemeni participation in IPU activities until it was determined which of the country's two parliamentary factions based, respectively, in San'a and Aden, was the legitimate representative of the Yemeni people. The IPU had met with both factions, which had committed themselves to working with the IPU to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need. The Executive Committee recommended that the IPU should continue its efforts to unify the two factions, in order to identify a single interlocutor as the institutional Member of the IPU.

The Governing Council took note of the information communicated to it in respect of the situation of the parliaments mentioned and approved the recommendations of the Executive Committee concerning those situations.

Item 4 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

(a) On his activities since the 200th session of the Governing Council
(CL/201/4(a)-R.1.rev)

The President provided, with the aid of slides, a summary of the activities he had conducted since the previous session of the Governing Council, as fully described in his report on the subject (CL/201/4(a)-R.1.rev). He had also been honoured, he said, to plant a tree in the grounds of the IPU headquarters in Geneva as a mark of his three-year term of office as IPU President.

A slide presentation was screened concerning the role, functions and aims of IPU TV, which had been launched at the 136th Assembly in Dhaka, and use of the IPU TV App.

The President, on another note, said that the IPU aimed to continue building on the concept of green Assemblies following the introduction of its PaperSmart policy in 2016. He recalled that the carbon footprint generated by the 136th Assembly in Dhaka had been offset through the distribution of improved cooking stoves to families in Bangladesh and noted that the Russian hosts of the current Assembly had provided delegates with recycled bags. He invited parliaments interested in hosting a green event to approach the IPU Secretariat for information concerning the calculation and offsetting of carbon emissions.

A delegate from Pakistan said that his country's Parliament was extremely green; it was fully solar-powered and even exported electricity during winter to the national grid.

The President said that such examples were inspiring and that parliaments could indeed do much to promote the green trend in the interest of sustainability and preserving the environment.

The Governing Council took note of the report of the President.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

The Secretary General announced that, in accordance with Rule 34.2 of the Rules of the Governing Council, the quorum of 101 was established for the current session on the basis of the participation of 200 Members or substitutes in the current first meeting of the Council.

The sitting rose at 11.20 a.m.

Second sitting

Wednesday, 18 October

The sitting was called to order at 9.20 a.m., with Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), President of the IPU, in the Chair.

Item 3 of the agenda (continued)

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP AND THE SITUATION OF CERTAIN PARLIAMENTS

(a) Requests for affiliation to the IPU and observer status (CL/201/3(a)-P.2)

The President said that, since the previous sitting of the Council, the Parliament of the Marshall Islands had submitted a formal request for affiliation, set out in document CL/201/3(a)-P.2, and that the Executive Committee had decided to approve the request. The Parliament, which would submit to the IPU the related resolution that it expected to adopt in the near future, was set to start paying its contributions to the IPU as from 1 January 2018. The Executive Committee had furthermore decided to admit the Parliament of Saint Lucia to the IPU on condition that it made a formal submission in writing and on the understanding that the Parliament would likewise start paying its contributions as from 1 January 2018. He took it that the Council wished to approve those two decisions, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Mr. E. Amblus (Vanuatu) expressed thanks to the IPU for the decision approved at the previous sitting of the Council to admit his country's Parliament to its membership. Representing a milestone in the country's development, full membership was an honour and a privilege for the Parliament and indeed for the 300,000-strong population of Vanuatu. The Parliament was committed to working with all IPU Members towards the goal of worldwide democracy.

The President said that the IPU was delighted to welcome the Parliament of Vanuatu as a Member.

Item 4 of the agenda (continued)

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President said that most of the subjects addressed by the Executive Committee during its two and a half days of intense and productive discussions in St. Petersburg would be reported on under the relevant items of the agenda. He added that the Committee had unanimously elected as its Vice-President Mr. K. Kosachev of the Russian Federation.

The Secretary General said that the Executive Committee had also discussed the need for a more structured approach to gathering the information reported to each Assembly on the situation of parliaments in countries facing political or other challenges. Following the discussion, it had recommended the endorsement of a proposal that the IPU should establish a high-level political panel composed of senior IPU Members and former IPU Presidents who could bring their experience to bear in investigating such situations and proposing solutions. The panel would then report its findings and make recommendations for consideration by the IPU governing bodies. The Committee had also requested the Secretariat to explore the modalities for such a panel, taking into account the IPU's goals and resources, with a view to preparing a proposal on the matter for possible adoption by the Council at the next Assembly in March 2018.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to endorse the proposal concerning the establishment of a high-level panel on parliamentary diplomacy.

It was so decided.

Mr. N. Evans (United Kingdom) expressed enthusiastic support for the establishment of such a panel, saying that it could serve only to further the IPU's mission to promote democracy worldwide. He suggested that the panel's first task should be to investigate the worrying situation in Venezuela, particularly as the elected Parliament was no longer functioning, through no fault of its own, and was therefore liable for suspension from the IPU membership.

Item 5 of the agenda

INTERIM REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE IPU SINCE THE 200th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

(a) Oral report of the Secretary General

The Secretary General provided, with the aid of slides, an overview of the activities of the IPU since the previous session of the Governing Council, saying that the IPU had pursued its efforts to strengthen the parliamentary role at all levels and to promote democracy and better outcomes for peoples, including by reaching out to a wide range of partners and stakeholders across the globe. It had also cemented its partnership with the United Nations system in such areas as climate change and sustainable development, thereby further securing the voice of parliaments in important global decision-making processes. It was working to promote the strategic objective of peacebuilding, as exemplified by its engagement with post-conflict actors and by the activities of the Committee on Middle East Questions. It continued actively to advocate women's political participation and gender equality, to engage with the diplomatic community and to increase youth participation in IPU activities. In short, the activities of the IPU were driven by its membership.

Recalling the launch of the new English version of the IPU website in October 2016, he said that the French version was now available and would soon be followed by the Arabic and Spanish versions. He expressed gratitude to the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates for the generous support it had provided for development of the website, which was an important tool for enhancing the visibility for the IPU.

An audiovisual presentation was screened, showcasing the new IPU website as a platform for communication between the IPU and the world's parliaments and peoples.

The President said that IPU TV and the new IPU website were clear examples of the IPU efforts to harness the latest technologies for improving the visibility and outreach of the IPU. He called on Members to interact with the global parliamentary community throughout the year by networking and sharing information about the work of their parliaments through both platforms.

The Governing Council took note of the oral report of the Secretary General.

(b) Annual reporting exercise by Members
(CL/201/5(b)-R.1)

The Secretary General, with the aid of a slide presentation, provided an overview of proposed changes to the annual reporting exercise by Members, saying that the proposal had been motivated by the extremely low response to the IPU's annual requests for information about follow-up action taken to implement IPU resolutions and decisions. In attempting to redress that situation, the novel approach taken had been to pilot a project in which the geopolitical groups identified five parliaments from their respective regions to complete an action-oriented questionnaire. The response rate had consequently tripled and voluntary feedback had been received in addition from Associate Members and other parliaments. Given those encouraging results, the Executive Committee had recommended that the IPU should proceed to institutionalize the piloted methodology. Full details of the project and its outcomes, including examples of best practices, were detailed in document CL/201/5(b)-R.1 and the annexes thereto.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to endorse the recommendation of the Executive Committee concerning the annual reporting exercise.

It was so decided.

(c) International Day of Democracy
(CL/201/5(c)-R.1)

The Secretary General drew attention to the information contained in document CL/201/5(c)-R.1, which described some of the activities organized by parliaments and the IPU to mark the International Day of Democracy on 15 September. Noting that 2017 was the 10th anniversary year of the occasion, which furthermore coincided with the 20th anniversary year of the adoption of the IPU's Universal Declaration of Democracy, he said that the proper exercise of democracy nonetheless faced a growing number of challenges. As part of its year-long campaign to protect and promote democracy, the IPU had therefore recently launched a global petition (#StrongerDemocracies) in defence of democracy, which all Members were urged to sign and disseminate as widely as possible.

The President invited Members to take part in a "democracy moment" by using their mobile telephones to sign the online petition, available at <https://campaign.ipu.org/>, in pledge of their rededication to the principles of democracy.

Instructions for signing the online petition in three simple steps were screened.

The President thanked Members for taking part in the "democracy moment".

Item 6 of the agenda

FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE IPU
(CL/201/6-R.1)

The Secretary General, drawing attention to document CL/201/6-R.1 concerning the financial situation of the IPU at 31 July 2017, said that the financial outlook was positive on the basis of the information provided therein, which he outlined, concerning income, expenditures, receipts, arrears in contributions, other accounts receivable, the Working Capital Fund and cash flow. The expectation was that the budget would continue to be implemented as envisaged, although it must be remembered that the implementation of IPU activities was dependent on assessed contributions. In the interest of financial predictability, therefore, the geopolitical groups were urged to engage with Members in arrears with a view to securing a commitment to settlement of the unpaid contributions detailed in Annex II to the document. Concerning capital expenditures, he highlighted the significant support provided by the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates for the ongoing development of the IPU website and pointed out the investment in new computer equipment. As to the Legacy Staff Pension Fund, sufficient resources were available for ensuring that the IPU fulfilled its obligations to the staff concerned.

The Governing Council took note of the financial situation of the IPU.

Item 7 of the agenda

DRAFT PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2018
(CL/201/7-P.1)

Mr. R. del Picchia (France), Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, presenting the consolidated budget for 2018 (CL/201/7-P.1), highlighted the information contained therein concerning income and expenditure and pointed out that assessed contributions were set to increase by 2 per cent in order to cover essential new expense items. For its part, the IPU Secretariat would continue its successful efforts to achieve cost savings in the implementation of the IPU programme objectives. He thanked the Parliament of the United Kingdom for its contribution to the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund for enabling the participation of parliaments, in particular those of small island developing States, in the work of the IPU. Applauding the professionalism of the expert members of the Sub-Committee on Finance in preparing such a balanced budget, he predicted stability in the financial situation of the IPU during the years to come and recommended approval of the draft programme and budget for 2018.

The President expressed appreciation to Mr. del Picchia, on behalf of the Executive Committee, for his excellent work at the helm of the Sub-Committee.

The Secretary General, echoing that appreciation, said that the IPU was committed to exercising the highest standards of transparency and accountability in implementing the budget. No further increase in the amount of assessed contributions was anticipated for the coming two years, which remained at virtually the same level as in 2006, even though IPU membership had been

rising steadily to the current number of 178. A proposal would be presented in due course, however, concerning any supplementary funding required in 2020 to cover the additional expenditure involved in organizing the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and its preparatory meetings.

He outlined details of the revenue obtained from other sources, including staff assessment, voluntary contributions and donors, as set out in document CL/201/7-P.1, as well as the annual expenditure on gender-specific activities, saying that the IPU served as a model to be emulated on that score. He further outlined the expenditures shown in relation to the IPU's Strategic Objectives and highlighted the environment-related aspects of the budget, including the provision made for offsetting carbon emissions generated by IPU activities. He pointed to the logical framework set out in the document as a useful results-based management tool for tracking progress in implementation of the Strategic Objectives and said that approval of the budget would enable the Secretariat to pursue its activities for driving forward the values and ideals of the IPU.

Mr. A.J. Alal (United Arab Emirates), paying tribute to all those who had provided input to the preparation of such a practical budget, called on Member Parliaments, wherever possible, to make voluntary contributions towards the work of the IPU and to settle arrears in contributions on behalf of fellow Members in difficulty. All Members should take on board their responsibilities by supporting the IPU programme and budget, he said.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to approve the draft programme and budget for 2018.

It was so decided.

Item 11 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(b) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians
(CL/201/11(b)-R.1, R.2 and P.1 to P.4)

Mr. B. Fabritius (Germany), Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, reporting on the activities of the Committee at its recent session in St. Petersburg, said that the Committee had been confronted with increasingly worrying human rights situations. Some countries were seeing the repression of opposition parliamentarians on an unprecedented scale and the undermining of the institution of parliament itself.

During IPU Assemblies, the Committee always tried to reach out to delegations to hear about the realities on the ground. It was critically important to hear both sides of the story and speak to governing and opposition parties alike. Unfortunately, in some of the situations that were most worrying, such as those of Cambodia and Maldives, no member of the opposition was on the delegation, which was deeply regrettable.

The Committee was concerned about the reprisals that Venezuelan parliamentarians had faced for speaking out abroad about the political situation in their country. It was concerned about its Venezuelan colleague, Delsa Solórzano, who would very soon be taking on the Vice-Presidency of the Committee. She had suffered attacks and was subject to continuous harassment. The Committee urged the authorities to ensure that she, along with her colleagues on the delegation, would face no reprisals on their return to Caracas.

Since the 136th Assembly, delegations from the Committee had visited the Philippines and Mongolia. The report of the mission to the Philippines was before the Council (CL/201/11(b)-R.1), together with the preliminary observations of the recently concluded mission to Mongolia (CL/201/11(b)-R.2). While the Committee benefited from outstanding assistance from the parliamentary authorities for most of its missions, it deeply regretted that the missions to Venezuela and Turkey had not yet taken place, a matter to which he said he would return when presenting the cases relating to both those countries.

Sharing statistics about the cases with which the Committee had dealt in St. Petersburg, he said that the Committee had had on its agenda the cases of 214 members of parliament in 11 countries. Thirty per cent were from Asia and the Americas; 27 per cent from Europe; 12 per cent from the Middle East and North Africa; and 1 per cent from Africa. Twenty-three per cent of the cases concerned women members of parliament and 85 per cent concerned opposition members.

The decisions to be presented concerned 200 parliamentarians in 11 countries. Among those 200 parliamentarians facing violations around the world, 53 were from Venezuela and 56 from Turkey. It was deeply regrettable that the number of colleagues facing repression due to their parliamentary work was constantly on the rise.

AFRICA

Cameroon

Mr. Ambassa Zang had left Cameroon in 2009 and enjoyed refugee status abroad. He had been sentenced to life imprisonment in June 2015 on accusations of misappropriating public funds when he was Minister of Public Works. The Committee believed there were so many irregularities that the verdict, which showed no evidence of personal enrichment, was untenable. To make matters worse, several months earlier, Mr. Ambassa Zang had also been punished for the same facts at the end of disciplinary proceedings. Again, there were real concerns about lack of due process and the severity of the penalty. Moreover, the Committee believed that Mr. Ambassa Zang had been able firmly to refute the accusations against him. The Committee therefore sincerely hoped that those matters could be fully and quickly addressed on appeal.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Dieudonné Ambassa Zang.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Committee had reviewed the cases of two opposition parliamentarians, Mr. Diomi Ndongala and Mr. Franck Diongo, who were both serving prison sentences following unfair trials.

It was dismayed that Mr. Diomi Ndongala's case had not yet been resolved. In the political agreement signed at the end of 2016, the country's authorities had made a commitment to release Mr. Ndongala, together with other political prisoners. No progress had been made, however, and Mr. Ndongala remained in detention. The Committee therefore urged the country's authorities to release him without further delay.

It also called for the urgent release of Mr. Franck Diongo. It very much feared that the real reason behind his arrest and prison sentence did not relate to the incident for which he had been incriminated. Rather, it found it credible that it related to his vocal opposition to the extension of the Head of State's mandate following the postponement of the 2016 elections. Based on the extensive information it had on file, the Committee was convinced that it was no coincidence that Mr. Diongo had been arrested on 19 December 2016 and expeditiously convicted in suspicious circumstances. He had been the only opposition voice still calling for protests on that day, a symbolic day given that it coincided with the scheduled end of the constitutional mandate of the Head of State. It was further shocked at the allegations that he had initially been kept in military confinement and tortured. It considered that Mr. Diongo met all the criteria of a political prisoner and called for his immediate release.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decisions relating to the cases of Mr. Eugene Diomi Ndongala and Mr. Franck Diongo.

EUROPE

Russian Federation

The Committee wished to present the long-standing case of Ms. Galina Starovoitova, a prominent human rights activist, who had been murdered in November 1998 in what the courts considered to be a politically motivated crime. Although some assailants had already been convicted and sentenced to prison terms, other participants in the crime, including the masterminds, had yet to be held to account. Indeed, despite the conviction of Mr. Glushchenko in 2015 to 17 years in prison as one of the organizers, the hearing conducted with the Russian delegation confirmed to the Committee that the person(s) who had given the orders to organize the assassination had not yet been charged.

The Committee acknowledged the relentless efforts and renewed commitment of the Russian authorities to ensure full accountability for the assassination. It was pleased to know that the investigation into Ms. Starovoitova's murder was still ongoing and hoped that evidence would soon be found to support further progress in the investigation, in particular towards the identification of the masterminds.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Ms. Galina Starovoitova.

Turkey

The Council would certainly recall that the Committee was monitoring the situation of 56 members of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) who had faced hundreds of terrorism and criminal charges since the Constitution had been amended to authorize a wholesale lifting of parliamentary immunity in May 2016.

Nine members of parliament continued to be held in detention. The Committee was deeply concerned about their conditions of detention given the claim that they were held in solitary confinement.

Dozens of trial proceedings were ongoing before tribunals scattered all over Turkey and many more trials were yet to come. In recent months, Turkish courts had convicted an increasing number of parliamentarians. A number of parliamentary mandates had been revoked already, as well as party membership and Turkish citizenship in some cases. Women parliamentarians had been disproportionately affected by these worrying developments.

The Committee was deeply concerned, even more so given that the Turkish authorities had rejected its request to conduct a mission to Turkey and visit the detained parliamentarians. It also deeply regretted that the Turkish delegation had also declined to meet with it during the current Assembly.

The Committee wished to alert the Council to the fact that the lack of cooperation and progress seemed to lend significant weight to the allegations and fears that the ongoing proceedings might indeed well be aimed at depriving HDP of effective representation in parliament and silencing the opposition and the populations they represented. Should that be confirmed, needless to say it would significantly affect the integrity of the institution of parliament in Turkey as a whole.

The Committee had been able to send an independent trial observer to Turkey recently. As the trial continued, it hoped that the observer would be allowed to attend the next hearings and subsequently provide it with a full report. It strongly reaffirmed its wish to go to Turkey to meet with all parties, including the parliamentarians in detention, and it urged the parliamentary authorities to reconsider their decision. It addressed its sincere thanks to IPU Members, such as the Nordic parliamentarians, who had informed it of action they had undertaken to support the urgent resolution of the case. It invited all IPU Members to take similar action to express parliamentary solidarity.

Mr. S. Soendergaard (Denmark) said that the report was far from encouraging, especially for those seeking to maintain good relations with Turkey and its people. It was indeed puzzling that the Turkish Government should have no objections to its Parliament's membership of the IPU while at the same time continuing to deny the Committee access to the Turkish parliamentarians serving prison sentences, many of them women. What was there to hide?

Ms. A. Clwyd (United Kingdom) said that the Turkish delegation's intransigence in refusing to give evidence to the Committee was an absolute disgrace. Furthermore, it was not only elected parliamentarians who had been tried without charge and imprisoned in Turkey but also academics, journalists and members of the public. The IPU must demonstrate its strong support for the Turkish parliamentarians concerned and convey the Committee's report to the Turkish authorities, which had no cause to behave in such an unacceptable manner if they had nothing to hide.

The President, agreeing with those comments, said it was unfortunate that an IPU Member should refuse to engage on such an important matter. He hoped that the Turkish authorities would reconsider their decision and allow the Committee to visit Turkish parliamentarians in prison.

Mr. C. Cakir (Turkey) said that Turkey was a democratic country where fundamental human rights and the rule of law were fully respected. Parliamentary immunity had been lifted pursuant to a constitutional amendment approved by a majority vote of three of the four political parties represented in parliament. Most HDP members, however, had failed to attend for compulsory questioning and refused to recognize the authority of the Prosecutor's Office. Their pretrial detention was appropriate, necessary and proportionate and had been ordered on the ground that calling for violence and creating propaganda in favour of the Kurdish Workers' Party terrorist organization did not fall within the scope of freedom of expression.

The President asked whether the Turkish decision to deny the Committee's request to visit the Turkish parliamentarians detained in prison might be reconsidered. He also noted the failure of the Turkish delegation to cooperate with the Committee during the current session.

Mr. C. Cakir (Turkey) replied that his delegation regularly provided the Committee with information concerning the latest developments in the situation.

The President suggested that the Turkish delegation should not only engage with the Committee but also consult further with the Turkish authorities concerning the Committee's mission request, as well as convey to them the Council's unanimous decision relating to the cases of 56 Turkish parliamentarians.

Ms. M. Kiener-Nellen (Switzerland) recalled that, in 2014, Committee members had conducted a mission to Turkey during which they had visited parliamentarians in prison. It was therefore difficult to comprehend why the current request was being denied.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of 56 parliamentarians from Turkey.

AMERICAS

Venezuela

As the Council was well aware, the situation in Venezuela had greatly worsened in recent months. The Committee was deeply concerned about the unprecedented scale of repression of opposition members and about efforts to undermine the parliament. It was shocked at the reports of attacks on parliamentarians and the role of State security agents and government supporters in these attacks, which had gone unpunished. As mentioned earlier, the Committee's own member Delsa Solórzano was a victim of those attacks. The Committee called on the authorities to put an end to the pattern of abuse.

The Committee was alarmed about the invasion and aggression that had occurred on 5 July 2017 in the National Assembly. On that day, government supporters had taken over the building for several hours. They had seriously wounded several parliamentarians as State security agents stood by. The Committee called on the authorities to do everything possible to investigate that extremely serious incident and punish those responsible.

The Committee was also deeply concerned about the general restrictions faced by the National Assembly, which had received no State funds for a year and a half. In the meantime, the Constituent Assembly, rather than focus on redrafting the Constitution, was steadily taking over the functions of the National Assembly. The Committee urged the authorities to respect the powers of the National Assembly and its members and to provide the necessary funding.

The Committee deeply regretted that the human rights mission to Venezuela had still not taken place. It was all the more convinced, given the rapidly deteriorating situation, that it needed to dispatch that mission in the near future, even if government endorsement was not forthcoming.

Lastly, the reprisals taken against several parliamentarians after they had spoken out abroad on the situation in Venezuela were unacceptable. The Committee urged the authorities to ensure that the members of the official Venezuelan delegation to the 137th IPU Assembly could return to Venezuela without having their passports confiscated at the border or being subject to other kinds of intimidation.

A delegate from Venezuela said that he rejected the Committee's report; it was subjective and failed to take account of all of the information provided to the Committee. Moreover, the claims that members of the Venezuelan delegation to the Assembly had been intimidated and threatened with confiscation of their passports on their return were utterly false. The Venezuelan parliamentarians alleging persecution and violation of their rights were in fact those who had been prosecuted for corruption.

The President said that the Venezuelan delegation comprised parliamentarians from various political parties, as encouraged by the IPU. It was regrettable, however, that Venezuelan diplomats and activists had falsely registered as journalists at the current Assembly. The individuals concerned had since been barred from entering the venue and had their badges cancelled. A disinformation campaign was also being conducted on Twitter concerning the composition and leadership of the Venezuelan delegation, which was officially headed by Ms. Solórzano.

Ms. D. Solórzano (Venezuela), regretting the focus on her country in a world so beset by other problems, said that the previous speaker from Venezuela was not a member of her delegation but represented the illegal Constituent Assembly. She commended the Committee on its work, describing it as honest and balanced. Her delegation shared the principles of the IPU and its mission to protect parliaments and parliamentarians.

Mr. L. Barredo Medina (Cuba) said it was thanks to an intensive media campaign that so many myths about the political situation in Venezuela were circulating. It was indeed regrettable that the Committee had been unable to undertake its planned mission to the country, as it would then have seen for itself that there was more to that situation than described in its report. He hoped that the mission would soon take place.

The President said that it was precisely in order to ascertain the true situation that the Committee had wished to undertake that mission. Despite providing categorical assurances at the 136th Assembly that the mission could take place, the Venezuelan Government had thus far extended no cooperation whatsoever to the IPU for facilitating the visit.

A delegate from Portugal said that the Venezuelan authorities were clearly fearful that the Committee would uncover the reality were it to undertake the mission. Given the IPU focus on strengthening democracy and upholding the human rights of parliamentarians, it was vital for Members to support the work of the Committee and show full solidarity with their Venezuelan colleagues.

Mr. A.K. Azad (Bangladesh) said that the deprivation and suffering of children in Venezuela was a matter of paramount concern alongside the violation of human rights.

The President agreed that it was civilians who suffered as a result of dysfunctional politics.

Ms. M.D.S. Espinales (Nicaragua) suggested dialogue as the basis for peacebuilding in Venezuela, where she said that the difficult socio-economic situation had been exacerbated by United States sanctions.

The President said that, in order to promote dialogue, the IPU must be allowed to conduct a mission to Venezuela.

Mr. F. de Mussy (Chile) said it was important to avoid being duped by fake news about the Venezuelan situation and to uphold the rights of the elected representatives of the Venezuelan people.

Mr. R. Gil Zuarth (Mexico) said that the democratic values and freedoms championed by the IPU were neither guaranteed nor respected in Venezuela. The IPU must therefore continue its defence of democracy and liberty in that country and likewise its insistence on conducting a fact-finding mission.

Mr. E.N. Rodríguez Zavaleta (Peru) agreed that democracy, albeit not the perfect system, must be upheld, saying that the IPU should accordingly maintain its position in support of the untrammelled exercise of democratic rights in Venezuela.

A delegate from Bolivia said that imperialist interference in any Latin American country was unacceptable.

Mr. F.M. Amoruso (Italy) expressed fully solidarity with the people of Venezuela, including its large Italian community, in their fight for democracy and human rights.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the cases of 53 parliamentarians from Venezuela.

ASIA

Cambodia

Regrettably, since 2016 and the Committee's most recent mission to Cambodia, the serious violations of human rights faced by parliamentarians of the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), the only opposition party represented in the Cambodian Parliament, had significantly escalated.

In early September, Mr. Kem Sokha, the current CNRP President, had been arrested at his home in the middle of the night. He had been placed in solitary confinement in a remote prison where he remained under 24-hour video surveillance in his cell. He was accused of planning to topple the Government with the assistance of the United States Government and faced 30 years in prison. The core evidence against him was a video of a public speech that had been online since that time.

The 14 other opposition parliamentarians, most of whom were part of the CNRP leadership, had also continued to face pressure and intimidation. First-instance convictions based on dubious grounds had further been confirmed on appeal. Many opposition parliamentarians had sought refuge abroad in recent weeks and were today in exile.

It was barely eight months until the general elections in Cambodia. The Minister of the Interior had recently requested the dissolution of the CNRP, on the basis of recent amendments to the political party law that did not comply with international standards on freedom of association. Legislative amendments had apparently been voted in only a few days earlier to allow for the redistribution of the opposition seats to other parties, should the Supreme Court dissolve the CNRP.

The Committee was appalled at the lack of clear and convincing responses provided by the Cambodian authorities on those developments and on the abuses faced by the 15 opposition parliamentarians whose cases were before the Committee. The Committee had met at length with the Cambodian delegation to the 137th Assembly but that had not alleviated its concerns. Quite the contrary.

Having carefully reviewed the videos of the 2013 speech of Mr. Kem Sokha, the Committee wished to point out that the speech contained nothing whatsoever that could constitute a criminal offence. Mr. Sokha did express support for political change in Cambodia but he clearly emphasized that he aimed to bring about such change by winning the elections. The Committee considered that his arrest was a clear violation of his freedom of expression and of his parliamentary immunity.

The Committee urged the Cambodian authorities to release him immediately and drop the charges. All other opposition parliamentarians should also be able to resume their political activities without further delay and restrictions and without fears of further arrests, reprisals or of the dissolution of the party. Urgent action was needed to ensure that they could participate and campaign freely in the run-up to the elections.

The Committee hoped that it would be allowed to visit Mr. Kem Sokha and that he would already have been released and cleared of all accusations by the time the response of the Cambodian authorities reached it.

The Committee had also met during its session with Ms. Mu Sochua, CNRP Vice-President and a parliamentarian who had been forced into exile due to the current situation. She had appealed to the IPU for help.

A video testimony of Ms. Mu Sochua, CNRP Vice-President, was screened.

Mr. K. Chhit (Cambodia), rejecting the Committee's report, said that the convictions mentioned had been handed down for crimes committed under Cambodian law. The allegations levelled by Ms. Mu Sochua were furthermore untrue; she had not been chased from the country but had left of her own accord. Human rights and the rule of law were fully respected in Cambodia. The Committee's report, on the other hand, lacked objectivity and unjustly omitted to present both sides of the case. His delegation stood ready to communicate requested information to the Committee in order to set the record straight. Cambodia upheld the principles of liberal multiparty democracy enshrined in its Constitution and its achievement of the peace and stability essential to democratization had come at a high price. It could therefore ill-afford to have irresponsible politicians who incited violence and discrimination leading to social turmoil. Nor could it tolerate acts of conspiracy aimed at regime change other than through elections held pursuant to the Constitution. Mutual respect and responsibility were the key to cooperation for the sake of the people and future generations of Cambodia. He appealed to all IPU Members not to support what he described as the Committee's biased decision.

The President asked whether it was true that the country's political party law had recently been amended and that the CNRP, the country's only opposition party, was to be dissolved as a consequence.

Mr. S. Yang (Cambodia) said that he was unaware of any such action.

The President asked Mr. Yang whether he would support such an amendment.

Mr. S. Yang (Cambodia) said that he had not had sight of any amendments to the law in question.

The President asked whether an amendment allowing the redistribution of 55 opposition seats to non-existent parties was consistent with a liberal multiparty democracy, saying that rather it pointed to the installation of a one-party system contrary to the spirit of the Cambodian Constitution.

Mr. S. Yang (Cambodia) again replied that he had not had sight of any such amendment and added that steps would be taken to facilitate the Committee's requested mission to Cambodia.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the cases of 15 parliamentarians from Cambodia.

Maldives

The Committee thanked the Maldivian delegation for taking the time to meet with it in St. Petersburg. It regretted, however, that no opposition members had been in the delegation, meaning that it had been unable to hear their side of the story.

The Committee was concerned that a sizeable part of the opposition in parliament had been subject to legal action. It was worried about ongoing reports of reduced space for freedom of expression and assembly and limited opportunities for the opposition to contribute to the work of parliament.

The Committee was also concerned about the increased militarization of the parliamentary premises. It was upset that parliamentarians had been forcibly prevented from entering the parliament on 24 July. It insisted that parliamentarians should at all times be able to go to the parliament and could never be prosecuted for doing so.

It welcomed the invitation from the parliamentary authorities for the Committee to conduct a mission to Maldives to discuss new and old concerns. It believed it was important that at the same time the IPU should offer its good offices to promote political dialogue and trust in the Maldives. Moreover, IPU technical assistance could help to ensure that the legal framework was in place for free and fair elections in 2018 and 2019.

Mr. A. Rifau (Maldives) said that his delegation had had positive discussions with the Committee, which had accepted its invitation to undertake a fact-finding mission to the Maldives. Facilitated by the Maldives Parliament and Government, the mission would be assured of access to the country's institutions and parliamentarians.

The President, welcoming that assurance he had received from the Speaker of the National Assembly, said that the IPU looked forward to its further cooperation with the Maldives authorities and to the conduct of free and fair elections involving all of the country's political parties in 2018.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the cases of 42 parliamentarians from Maldives.

Mongolia

The Committee had conducted a mission to Mongolia only a few weeks earlier. It wished to thank the parliamentary authorities for their cooperation during the mission. It noted with deep regret, however, that the delegation had not been not allowed to meet the convicts in prison or the members of the Supreme Court.

The full mission report would be presented to the Council at the next IPU Assembly, together with the observations of the Mongolian authorities. In the meantime, it had before it the preliminary observations and recommendations of the delegation (CL/201/11(b)-P.3), to which the Committee had fully subscribed.

The Committee deplored that the trial and conviction of three suspects for the assassination of Mr. Zorig had violated international fair-trial standards. Recourse to secret trials and evidence had raised serious questions about the integrity of the whole process, especially given serious and credible reports about torture and intimidation of suspects and witnesses. It therefore called for the release of the three convicted persons until a fair, just and transparent retrial was completed in the presence of domestic and international observers.

It also urged the Mongolian Parliament to urgently re-establish an ad hoc parliamentary committee to that end and give it the clear mandate to review all issues of concern and recommend effective remedies. It reaffirmed the availability of the IPU to provide technical assistance to that end.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Zorig Sanjasuuren.

Philippines

Mr. B. Fabritius (Germany) thanked the parliamentary authorities, in particular the President of the Senate, for receiving the Committee delegation that had visited the Philippines in May in connection with the case of Ms. Leila de Lima. The Council had before it the report of that mission (CL/201/11(b)-R.1).

Senator de Lima had been a staunch human rights defender, including as Chair of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights. She had been detained since February on accusations of complicity in drug-trafficking.

As a woman parliamentarian, she had been subject to a public campaign of vilification by the highest state authorities. The Committee found that situation unacceptable.

The mission report called for Senator de Lima's immediate release and for the criminal proceedings to be dropped if serious evidence was not produced soon. In fact, it believed that the report clearly showed that the steps taken against Senator de Lima came in response to her vocal opposition to President Duterte's war on drugs.

The Committee called on the Senate to take a firm stance in support of Senator de Lima and of her direct participation in its work. It proposed to send a trial observer to monitor the trial proceedings, should it come to that.

The President commented that, notwithstanding its support for zero-tolerance drug policies, the IPU was deeply concerned by the 6,000 extrajudicial killings carried out in the Philippines by law enforcement authorities and vigilante groups. It must therefore stand in strong solidarity with Senator de Lima, who had effectively been punished for her opposition to such killings.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of Ms. Leila de Lima.

Sri Lanka

The Committee had had a very useful hearing with the Sri Lankan delegation led by the Speaker.

Significant developments had taken place in Sri Lanka since a new President and a new parliament had been elected in 2015. Both seemed keen to promote truth and justice in an effort to address the substantive human rights violations committed by the Government and its collaborators, on the one hand, and the "Tamil Tigers", on the other, during the internal conflict ended in 2009.

That renewed commitment to truth and justice could well explain why there had since been important progress in the case of Mr. Pararajasingham, who had been murdered in 2005. The Committee hoped that similar progress could be achieved in the case involving the murder of Mr. Raviraj. In both cases, it was crucial for the Sri Lankan authorities to pursue their efforts to locate suspects said to be abroad and to have them extradited. It was also absolutely critical that the authorities quickly put in place the proposed hybrid court, with both national and international components, to try serious crimes that had taken place during the internal conflict. The Committee had therefore been pleased to hear from the Minister of Justice that that would soon happen. It believed that a parliamentary select committee tasked with monitoring the investigations into the assassinations of members of parliament could also make a critical contribution to those efforts. It therefore hoped that the committee would soon be set up.

The Governing Council adopted unanimously the draft decision relating to the case of four parliamentarians from Sri Lanka.

Palestine/Israel

The Committee wished to present a new case of a Palestinian parliamentarian, Ms. Najat Abu Bakr, whose parliamentary immunity had been revoked through a decision by President Abbas in 2016. It was extremely worried about that decision, as it contradicted the principle of separation of powers and the independence of parliament.

Regrettably, the hearing the Committee had had with a member of the Palestinian delegation had not provided the Committee with the answers it had hoped for. It was very concerned about the restrictions faced by Ms. Abu Bakr, as her situation seemed to have come about as a result of the legitimate exercise of her parliamentary mandate. It sincerely hoped therefore that the court would provide her with redress without delay.

Concerning the cases of Palestinian parliamentarians in Israeli detention, the Committee had reviewed the long-standing cases of Mr. Barghouti and Mr. Sa'adat, who continued to serve their long prison terms. It continued to call for their release, given that their trials had not met fair-trial standards. Until that happened, it was keen to visit them in prison and urged the Israeli authorities to finally accede to its request. Earlier in 2017, Mr. Barghouti had initiated a hunger strike that had ended in May, and in which Mr. Sa'adat as well as hundreds of Palestinian inmates, had taken part. The strike had been in protest against the detention conditions in Israeli prisons and underscored the need to safeguard detainees' visiting rights and adequate medical care.

The Committee was also concerned about the re-arrest and administrative detention of Mr. Al-Natsheh and Ms. Jarrar and the fact that eight other parliamentarians were also in such detention. As the case history showed, even when members of the Palestinian Legislative Council were released, they remained subject to renewed arrest and could be placed in administrative detention again at any time. The Committee was deeply concerned about the continued practice of administrative detention and the potential for arbitrariness. It called on the Israeli authorities to abandon that practice and, until that happened, to put in place effective safeguards against abuses, most notably with regard to the use of classified evidence.

In the light of the important concerns in each of those cases, it regretted that the head of the Knesset delegation had declined the invitation to meet with the Committee. It nevertheless hoped that it could pursue both a written and face-to-face dialogue to find satisfactory solutions for those cases.

Mr. N. Shai (Israel) said that, contrary to his belief that the IPU was united in the global efforts to combat the terrorism affecting all corners of the world, its Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was defending two murderers imprisoned by the Israeli courts for their acts of terrorism. His delegation had already provided to the Committee all the information that it was able to disclose without compromising national security. Israel would continue its fight against terrorism in its own defence while at the same time seeking peace for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

The President asked why the head of the Knesset delegation had declined the invitation to meet with the Committee.

Mr. N. Shai (Israel) explained that there had been no new information to report since his hearing with the Committee at the 134th Assembly in 2016. The Palestinian parliamentarians had been convicted by the world-renowned Israeli justice system on the strength of convincing evidence concerning their involvement in terrorist activities. Although it had been revealed to the courts, that evidence could not be made public.

Ms. W. Bani Mustafa (Jordan), thanking the Committee for its impartiality, said that Palestinians were the only people in the world still under occupation. He added that the parliamentarians concerned were not terrorists but defenders of the rights and freedoms of the Palestinians living under occupation by a State that resorted to all available means for annihilating the Palestinian people. Describing the Committee's report as impartial, she added that the parliamentarians were in fact being held in administrative detention without trial in a country nonetheless claiming to uphold the rule of law. Israel furthermore claimed to champion cultural diversity whereas it was clearly an apartheid State, as well as an advocate of terrorism.

Mr. Q. Khader (Palestine) said that democracy and the rule of law in Israel were patently being exercised to the detriment of the Palestinian people and in violation of the most fundamental pillars of international law. The Committee's report painted an accurate picture, whereas the Israeli judiciary was covering up the reasons for the administrative detention of Palestinian parliamentarians. The failure of Israel to respect international humanitarian law revealed its democracy to be a sham. The truth about the Israeli justice system, moreover, was clear from the minimal punishment meted out to Israeli soldiers guilty of killing Palestinians in cold blood, as evidenced by the video footage of that crime, which had been widely viewed the world over.

Mr. M. Alghanim (Kuwait), agreeing that the Committee's report was indeed objective, said that the delegate representing an illegal occupier, State terrorist and murderer of children had demonstrated by his presence at the current meeting that he lacked all dignity.

Mr. A. Bagdache (Syrian Arab Republic) commented that the delegate was citing well-worn fascist arguments to justify the actions of a terrorist and apartheid regime against a people fighting for its liberation.

Mr. M.R. Rabbani (Pakistan), noting that a terrorist was a terrorist under any guise, asked why the tone and tenor of the decision on Palestine were so markedly different from those of the decisions relating to the cases in Cambodia and Turkey, for example. He expressed strong exception to the temperate and polite language used in the former, asserting that it smacked of double standards; no person's blood was cheaper than another's, he said.

The President said that there must be no doubt about the IPU position on human rights. The Committee exercised the same judgement in all cases involving the human rights of parliamentarians and the records of IPU proceedings were moreover testament to the lack of any double standards.

Ms. S. Haskel (Israel), recalling the IPU aspiration to strengthen democracy, pointed out that it was over 10 years since the last Palestinian legislative elections had taken place. The double standard therefore was that the Committee should be singling out Israel, the only true democracy in the Middle East, for criticism. Israel guaranteed equal human rights to all citizens, in contrast to the representatives of the Palestinian people who were abusing their powers and investing public funds in terrorism instead of education, infrastructure and the like.

Ms. S. Ksamtni (Tunisia) welcomed the Committee's report on the cases of the Palestinian parliamentarians detained in violation of international law by the long-standing occupier of Palestine. She called for an IPU fact-finding mission to Israel and for the expulsion of Israel from the IPU membership.

The President said that the IPU had received assurances from the Israeli delegation that it could proceed with a fact-finding mission. He urged delegates to be courteous and respectful of parliamentary decorum in their interventions. While the IPU encouraged plurality of views, such diversity should not come at the expense of proper parliamentary tradition or degenerate into verbal attacks.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decisions relating to the cases of Mr. Marwan Barghouti, Mr. Ahmad Sa'adat and Ms. Najat Abu Bakr, and to the case of 22 other parliamentarians from Palestine.

Mr. B. Fabritius (Germany), Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, concluding his report, said that when parliamentarians were threatened, the active solidarity of colleagues not only had a very positive impact on individual cases but also consolidated the institution of parliament itself.

He added that the Committee was engaged in the important work of protecting the human rights and indeed the lives of parliamentarians worldwide. Almost all parliamentarians could become a case before the Committee were they to come under threat and be in serious need of protection. He therefore called on every single colleague and all IPU bodies, including the Executive Committee, to respect and support the work and decisions of the Committee, whose members he thanked for their full commitment to the fight for human rights and better democracies.

The President thanked Mr. Fabritius and the Committee for their outstanding work and drew attention to the candidatures received for the election of four individuals to replace the outgoing members of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians: Ms. J. Mukoda Zabwe (Uganda) and Mr. N. Bako-Arifari (Benin) for the African Group, and Ms. A. Jerkov (Serbia) and Mr. A. Caroni (Switzerland) for the Twelve Plus Group, whose respective particulars were set out in documents CL/200/11(b)-P.1 to P.4. He said he took it that the Council wished to elect those candidates to the Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 15 of the agenda

**ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
(CL/201/15-P.1 and P.2)**

The President, recalling that his three richly rewarding years in office as President of the IPU would end during the current Assembly, drew attention to the two candidatures received for the post, namely those of Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron (Mexico) and Ms. Ivonne Passada (Uruguay), whose respective particulars were set out in documents CL/201/15-P.1 and P.2. He invited the two candidates to present themselves and their vision for the IPU to the Council.

Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico), noting that it was the first time that a Mexican had been nominated as a candidate for the position of IPU President, said that she was a strong supporter of multilateralism and inclusiveness. In representing such a diversity of peoples with differing beliefs, the IPU bore a great responsibility for finding common ground towards new solutions to the global challenges affecting all nations.

As a woman who believed in honesty, she had always worked hard to defend her convictions and meet her responsibilities. She saw transparency and accountability as core democratic values and the person as central to all political decision-making, which was the catalyst for change at the local, national and international levels. She proposed to learn French in order to converse directly with Francophone Members and would also do her utmost to ensure that Arabic-, Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking Members felt at home within the IPU.

Expressing her commitment to the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021, she suggested that its implementation should be guided by four key areas of focus, specifically: enhancement of the IPU's transparency, efficiency, inclusiveness and communication capacities; the IPU at the service of parliamentarians; youth participation in national parliaments; and the IPU as a global actor. She appealed to Members not only for their votes but also for their talents, minds, hands and hearts in the interest of transforming the IPU into an organization fit for purpose in the fast-changing 21st century.

Ms. I. Passada (Uruguay) said that, through her participation in IPU activities, she was thoroughly familiar with the IPU membership and with the work undertaken by the IPU in conjunction with and on behalf of all parliaments and parliamentarians. Her candidacy was fully supported by the Uruguayan Parliament, including its opposition party members. The IPU was a platform for democracy in action across the globe for the sake of peace and conflict prevention, a process in which parliamentarians were so often involved as representatives of the people. The IPU was a place for dialogue and it was furthermore uniquely placed, including through its ties with the United Nations system, to ensure that the parliamentary voice was heard.

She hoped that her two terms of service as Vice-President of the IPU would inspire Members to place their trust and confidence in her as a candidate for the post of President. If elected, she would make only realistic promises and seek the engagement of all Members in the work at hand. She would also prioritize efforts to improve the response rate in the annual reporting exercise by Members and to cement her relationship with them through personal interaction. With respect to the finances of the Organization, she would bring to bear the expertise she had gained through her budgetary oversight responsibilities in her own Parliament. She stood ready to devote her heart and mind to the IPU.

The Secretary General explained the voting procedure described in the hand-out circulated to Members.

Mr. R. León Ramírez (Chile), supported by *delegates from Paraguay and Peru*, proposed that the vote count should be telecast live so that Members could keep abreast of its progress.

The President said that, in the interest of time management, the usual practice followed after recording the votes cast in elections for the IPU President was to have the votes counted in the presence of observers representing the candidates while the Council continued with its business. If the vote count were to be telecast, it would require a suspension of the meeting until the results were ready to be announced. He added that the presence of the observers and of IPU representatives in addition meant that there was no cause for concern about the transparency of the vote count.

Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation), supported by *a delegate from Ghana*, agreed with the idea of a public vote count as long as provision was made for it in the agenda, which was not the case on the current occasion. He said that technically it was feasible but it would take time to put in place the logistics. Therefore, he suggested that the idea should be further explored for future reference and that the usual practice be followed in the meantime.

The President, responding to a question from *a delegate from Bolivia* about whether delegation members belonging to minority parties were entitled to vote, said that each delegation was sovereign and that the IPU thus had no say in such matters.

Ms. R. Alitwala Kadaga (Uganda), supported by **delegates from the United Arab Emirates and Costa Rica**, said that the past practice of continuing to conduct the business of the Council during the vote count had always proved satisfactory and should therefore continue.

The President, mindful of the time that would be required to organize a live telecast at short notice, asked the two candidates if they were amenable to proceeding in accordance with the past practice.

Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico) suggested that the vote count could perhaps take place at the same time and in the same room as the business of the Council so that it could still be witnessed by Council Members.

Ms. I. Passada (Uruguay) said that the past practice was evidently trustworthy and should be maintained during the current election, although a public vote count could perhaps be introduced in future.

A delegate from Panama, supported by **a delegate from the Netherlands**, suggested that delegates should be allowed to view proceedings in the counting room while the Council continued with its business.

The President said that the only possible choice lay between following the usual practice or suspending Council business to allow a public vote count. At the same time, however, it was important for any concerns about the integrity of the usual practice to be voiced and taken on board.

Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico) said that transparency was a key parliamentary principle but that, in view of time constraints and the logistical difficulties entailed in organizing a public vote count at short notice, she would be amenable to following the established practice in a spirit of compromise.

The President therefore invited the Council to elect by secret ballot a new IPU President, adding that the IPU was all in favour of enhancing transparency and that the suggestion concerning a public vote count would be taken into account for future reference so that the necessary arrangements could be made in advance.

A vote was taken by secret ballot, with Mr. Anti Avsan (Sweden) and Ms. Vaseqa Khan (Bangladesh) acting as tellers. Representing Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico) and Ms. I. Passada (Uruguay) as observers present during the counting of the votes were, respectively, Mr. José Ignacio Echániz Salgado (Spain) and Senator Luis A. Heber (Uruguay).

Number of ballot papers:	361
Invalid ballots:	4
Number of valid ballots:	357
Required majority:	181
Number of votes obtained:	
Ms. G. Cuevas Barrón (Mexico):	287
Ms. I. Passada (Uruguay):	70

Having obtained the required majority and the largest number of votes, **Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico)** was elected to serve as **President of the IPU for a three-year term, ending in October 2020.**

The President congratulated his successor on her election.

Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico), President-elect of the IPU, thanked all those who had trusted her with their votes, saying that she was greatly honoured to be elected as President of the IPU in a process that epitomized the democratic vocation embodied in the Organization since its foundation in 1889. In assuming the challenges and responsibilities associated with the position, she would seek to fulfil the expectations of the membership and achieve the results to which it aspired.

She praised Mr. Chowdhury for his dedication and success in moving the IPU forward in innovative directions and called on Members to work with her as one to further increase the strength, relevance and communication capacities of the IPU. Noting the historic moment signalled by the candidacy of two women for the post of IPU President, she paid tribute to her fellow candidate Ms. Passada and expressed warmest gratitude to all those from her region and elsewhere, not least the members of her own country's Parliament and foreign services, who had worked so hard in active support of her campaign over the past months. As a result of her interaction with IPU Members throughout that learning process, she had formed a clear vision of the intensive work to be undertaken during her coming term of office with a view to building a fairer, more democratic and inclusive world for all. It was through the joint efforts of its membership that the IPU would promote peace and harmony among peoples.

Mr. M. Alghanim (Kuwait), taking the opportunity to pay tribute to Mr. Chowdhury, said that he would always be remembered as an outstanding President of the IPU.

The President thanked the IPU membership for their support that had made his task possible.

The sitting rose at 2.20 p.m.

Third sitting

Wednesday, 18 October

The sitting was called to order at 3.55 p.m., with Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), President of the IPU, in the Chair.

Item 8 of the agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IPU STRATEGY FOR 2017-2021 (CL/201/8-R.1 and 8(a)-P.1)

The Secretary General drew attention to the report on activities undertaken between March and September 2017 to implement the IPU Strategy (CL/201/8-R.1), saying that it contained information specific to each objective. He further drew attention to a proposal, set out in document CL/201/8(a)-P.1, concerning measures to enhance youth participation at the IPU. The proposal was that, by 2020, each delegation to an IPU Assembly should comprise a minimum of one member under the age of 45 with a view to eventually ensuring that at least one quarter of participants in the Assembly were young parliamentarians. He outlined the related incentives, conditions and implementation requirements explained in the document and added that, were the proposal to be approved, the birth year and sex of delegation members would be stated on the online registration form for statistical purposes. Amendments to the IPU Statutes necessitated by approval of the proposal would be submitted for the consideration of the Council at its next session in Geneva.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) said that, while he had no objection to the proposal, it must be recognized that Members faced increasing difficulty in fulfilling the growing number of requirements concerning the composition of their delegations.

Mr. R.N. Igbokwe (Nigeria), supported by **Mr. G.D. Mitokpe (Benin)**, said that the proposed new requirement, which had emanated from young parliamentarians themselves, would send home the message about the need to enhance youth participation in the IPU and build confidence in young parliamentarians concerning their role.

Ms. R. Alitwala Kadaga (Uganda) expressed support for the proposal; the IPU could not afford to ignore the young, who constituted the majority of the population in many countries.

The Governing Council approved the proposal for enhancing youth participation at the IPU.

The Secretary General drew attention to a new knowledge product to be launched at the current Assembly, namely the *Global Parliamentary Report 2017: Parliamentary Oversight: Parliament's power to hold government to account*, which had been produced on the basis of information contributed by 150 parliaments. Soon to be available in Arabic, French and Spanish, the publication made a strong case for oversight and accountability, notably in the fight against corruption, in the interest of improved governance. He expressed gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for the support and assistance they had provided towards development of the report.

The Global Parliamentary Report 2017: Parliamentary Oversight: Parliament's power to hold government to account was launched and a photograph taken to mark the occasion.

The President urged Members to make use of the report on returning to their countries, saying that it was a useful guidance tool for action to improve governance and thus ensure a better future for all.

Item 9 of the agenda

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (CL/201/9-R.1)

The Secretary General, presenting the checklist of activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations system from 15 March to 15 September 2017, as set out in document CL/201/9-R.1, said that the areas covered included democracy and human rights, gender equality

and youth empowerment, international peace and security, and sustainable development. In pursuit of those activities, the IPU maintained its partnerships with various United Nations agencies and its contact with the senior-level management of the United Nations.

In the context of cooperation relating to Objective 4 of the IPU Strategy (Contribute to peacebuilding, conflict prevention and security), he said that the IPU and the United Nations had together designed an initiative, built on IPU resolutions and decisions, for enhancing the IPU's contribution to the global efforts to fight terrorism and violent extremism. In the context of encouraging the Secretariat to implement the initiative, the Executive Committee had recommended that the Council should endorse the Committee's approval of the related proposal to establish a high-level advisory group from among the IPU membership to provide political and managerial oversight of the initiative. The group's initial task would be to explore the modalities for implementing the initiative, including by drawing on the expertise of appropriately qualified IPU Members, with a view to reporting its conclusions to the Council at the next Assembly.

Mr. I. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom) said that he was fully in favour of such a group if driven by IPU ideals but noted that it would be necessary to raise US\$ 6 million from among the IPU membership for its establishment. Furthermore, the group must clearly recognize and understand the need to retain the clear distinction between the role of the IPU and governments in combating terrorism, together with the fact that the IPU was not – and never should be – a part of the United Nations. Given the complex nature of counterterrorism, he urged the IPU to adopt a measured approach in working on the initiative so as to achieve the right outcomes. The IPU membership would surely be pleased to provide any relevant advice and looked forward to receiving regular updates on the work in progress.

The President, responding to a request from **Mr. A.K. Azad (Bangladesh)** for further clarification, said that the group would be Member-led and focus on preventing the root causes of terrorism rather than on the more common reactive approach of addressing its consequences for security. Full details concerning its functions and financial requirements would be provided at the next Assembly in Geneva.

The Governing Council endorsed the recommendation of the Executive Committee concerning the establishment of a high-level advisory group on countering terrorism and violent extremism and took note of the activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations system.

Item 10 of the agenda

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS.

(a) Regional seminar for young parliamentarians of the Asia-Pacific region
(CL/201/10(a)-R.1)

Mr. A. Rifau (Maldives) presented the report contained in document CL/201/10(a)-R.1 on the two-day regional seminar held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in April 2017, for young parliamentarians of the Asia-Pacific region, which had as its theme *The role of young parliamentarians in advancing inclusive and peaceful societies and preventing violent extremism*. Following his outline of the proceedings, he drew attention to the outcome document annexed to the report, in particular the measures set out therein for combating violent extremism, and thanked the Sri Lankan Parliament for its hosting of such an excellent seminar.

(b) Regional seminar for the Asia-Pacific region on the Sustainable Development Goals
(CL/201/10(b)-R.1)

The President recalled that he had provided information concerning the three-day regional seminar on the SDGs, held in Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, in May 2017, in the report he had delivered on his activities at the first sitting of the Council, saying that the full details were available in document CL/201/10(b)-R.1.

(c) Parliamentary meeting at the 70th World Health Assembly
(CL/201/10(c)-R.1)

The President drew attention to the report contained in document CL/201/10(c)-R.1 on the one-day parliamentary meeting held in May 2017 at the 70th World Health Assembly, which he said was available, together with the other reports under item 10 of the agenda, on the IPU website.

**(d) Regional conference on violence against women and girls
for Central and Eastern Europe**
(CL/201/10(d)-R.1)

Ms. S.-M. Dinică (Romania) presented the report contained in document CL/201/10(d)-R.1 on the three-day regional conference held in Bucharest, Romania, in June 2017, on the theme *Making laws work to end violence against women and girls*. Following her outline of the proceedings, she drew attention to the outcome document annexed to the report, in particular the strategies set out therein for combating gender-based violence. She added that her country's domestic violence law was being revised to provide for the new occupation of gender equality expert.

(e) Regional seminar on promoting child nutrition in Western and Central Africa
(CL/201/10(e)-R.1)

Mr. A. Nombre (Burkina Faso) presented the report contained in document CL/201/10(e)-R.1 on the two-and-a-half-day regional seminar held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in June 2017, which had centred on child nutrition in Western and Central Africa. Issues discussed had included the role of parliaments in advancing nutrition and means of improving the nutrition-related statistics for mortality and disease in children of the subregion. He drew attention to the declaration annexed to the document, in particular the priority actions for parliaments in such areas as legislation and policy, budget allocation and expenditure, and oversight, and thanked the IPU for its valuable capacity-building support to parliaments in his subregion.

(f) Second Roundtable on Water: From words to actions
(CL/201/10(f)-R.1)

Ms. D. Pascal Allende (Chile), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, presented the report contained in document CL/201/10(f)-R.1 on the two-day Roundtable on Water held in July 2017 at IPU Headquarters in Geneva, which had focused on moving from words to actions. Following her outline of the proceedings, including the expert presentations and accounts of national experiences delivered, she drew attention to the recommendations set out in the report, adding that Egypt and Jordan had offered to host future water-related events.

**(g) Parliamentary meeting at the United Nations High-level Political Forum on
Sustainable Development**
(CL/201/10(g)-R.1)

Ms. C.L. Crexel (Argentina) presented the report contained in document CL/201/10(g)-R.1 on the one-day parliamentary meeting held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, in July 2017, saying that the doubling of the attendance figure since the previous meeting in 2016 evidenced the inroads being made by the IPU in connecting the parliamentary community to the United Nations-led global review process for the SDGs. Following panel discussions and a debate concerning parliamentary action on the SDGs, the meeting had formulated the key messages and recommendations described in the report and concluded that the IPU and donors must invest more resources towards strengthening the capacity of parliaments to institutionalize the SDGs.

**(h) Second interregional seminar on parliamentary capacity-building and the further
implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals**
(CL/201/10(h)-R.1)

Mr. X. Wang (China) presented the report contained in document CL/201/10(h)-R.1 on the three-day interregional seminar held in Beijing, China, in September 2017, on parliamentary capacity-building and the further implementation of the SDGs. He said that the in-depth discussions of the Asian and Francophone African parliamentarians in attendance had focused on legislative experiences in the area of sustainable development, Chinese-African cooperation, responses to

climate change, and the role of industrial and agricultural modernization in poverty reduction. Among the conclusions drawn by participants was the need to strengthen cooperation, including through the exchange of experiences, in order to build parliamentary capacities for overseeing the implementation of the SDGs and ultimately achieve win-win outcomes in the pursuit of shared aims.

The President said that the ongoing Chinese capacity-building support extended to parliamentarians was much appreciated.

(i) Regional conference for young parliamentarians of African parliaments
(CL/201/10(i)-R.1)

Mr. R.N. Igbokwe (Nigeria) presented the report contained in document CL/201/10(i)-R.1 on the two-day regional conference held in Abuja, Nigeria, in October 2017, for young African parliamentarians on the theme *Empowering youth: Enhancing political participation for more inclusive and peaceful societies*. Following his summary of the proceedings described in the report, he said that the conference had not only brought together young parliamentarians but had also served as a mechanism for the follow-up of IPU resolutions and activities aimed at increasing youth participation in the IPU and parliaments. He called on all Members to support the creation, operation and funding of national forums of young parliamentarians as an ideal platform for networking with young people and in turn enabling them to access the institution of parliament.

The Governing Council took note of the reports on recent IPU specialized meetings.

Item 11 of the agenda
(continued)

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(a) Forum of Women Parliamentarians
(CL/201/11(a)-R.1)

Ms. G. Karelova (Russian Federation), President of the 26th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the session (CL/201/11(a)-R.1), highlighted the information contained therein concerning the Forum's contributions to the work of the Assembly from a gender perspective, the panel discussion held to mark the fifth anniversary of the Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, and the parity debate focused on budgetary oversight for the common good. She added that a representative of the Eurasia Group had been elected to the Bureau and that the candidature of Ms. S. Errante (France) had subsequently been received to fill the vacant position for a member representing the Twelve Plus Group.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to approve the election of Ms. S. Errante (France) to the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

It was so decided.

The President, sharing statistics on the gender composition of delegations to the 137th Assembly, said that there were 18 all-male delegations and 1 all-female delegation in attendance. Of those single-sex delegations, 10 had been sanctioned for having been represented on three or more consecutive occasions by only men or women, specifically the delegations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Haiti, Luxembourg, Malta, Micronesia, Nicaragua, Qatar, Samoa and Somalia. The aim was for all delegations to comprise both male and female members.

(c) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/201/11(c)-R.1 and P.1 to P.3)

Ms. D. Pascal Allende (Chile), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, presenting the Committee's report (CL/201/11(c)-R.1) on its two days of meetings during the current session, summarized the proceedings detailed in the report, which had included briefings on the situations in Yemen and the Syrian Arab Republic. The Committee had also identified two projects for translating into practice the recommendations of the Second Roundtable on Water, held in July 2017 in Geneva and proposed follow-up actions. It was also planning a fact-finding mission to Israel. Lastly, it had agreed to defer the election of her successor until its next session in 2018, as the two candidates for the position had been unable to attend the session.

The President, referring to three vacancies for membership of the Committee, drew attention to the particulars of three candidatures received, as set out in documents CL/201/11(c)-P.1 to P.3, and said he took it that the Council wished to elect Ms. B. Grouwels (Belgium) to fill the one of the two vacancies available for a female member.

It was so decided.

The President said that, in order to fill the one vacancy available for a male member, the Council must elect either Mr. H. Julien-Laferrière (France), the candidate nominated by the Twelve Plus Group, or Mr. G. Mihaylov (Bulgaria), the candidate nominated by the National Assembly of Bulgaria.

On the basis of a vote by show of hands, the Governing Council elected Mr. H. Julien-Laferrière (France) to fill the vacancy available for a male member on the Committee.

(e) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/201/11(e)-R.1 and P.1 to P.3)

Ms. M. Green (Sweden), presenting the report of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law on its work at the current session (CL/201/11(e)-R.1), outlined the details set out therein concerning the discussions held on refugee protection, with a particular focus on the humanitarian situation of Rohingya refugees; statelessness, including progress towards its end; and the debate on the relevance of law in contemporary war, organized in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), to mark the 40th anniversary of the adoption of Protocols I and II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949. She drew attention to the joint ICRC-IPU publication of the Handbook *International Humanitarian Law*, saying that the Committee encouraged its use by all parliaments.

The President, referring to the three candidatures received, as detailed in documents CL/201/11(e)-P.1 to P.3, for the four membership vacancies on the Committee, said he took it that the Council wished to elect Mr. D. Chukolov (Bulgaria) as a male member for the Twelve Plus Group; Ms. E. Vtorygina (Russian Federation) as a female member for the Eurasia Group; and Ms. A. Dafia Ouassagari (Benin) as a female member for the African Group.

It was so decided.

(f) Advisory Group on Health
(CL/201/11(f)-R.1)

Ms. J.A. Gakuba (Rwanda), presenting the report of the Advisory Group on Health on its one-day meeting at the current session (CL/201/11(f)-R.1), said that the Group had primarily discussed the field visit it had conducted in St. Petersburg in order to examine the impact of the HIV epidemic on the community. It had been impressed by the comprehensive multi-stakeholder approach adopted in tackling the epidemic, which included public awareness-raising activities and free access to appropriate support for those living with HIV. It had recommended the replication of that approach at the national and regional levels, with the Russian Parliament playing a legislative role in support of those working to help persons living with the virus.

(g) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/201/11(g)-R.1)

Ms. M. Osoru (Uganda), President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, presenting the report on the Forum's meeting during the current session (CL/201/11(g)-R.1), said that lively discussions had taken place on such topics as progress achieved and challenges encountered in the area of youth participation; the link between youth participation and democracy; and future youth-related activities, including preparation for the next Assembly. Participants had also welcomed the decision of the Executive Committee to support its proposal that all delegations to IPU Assemblies should, by 2020, include at least one member under 45 years of age and were furthermore looking forward to the Fourth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in November. The Forum had elected Mr. B. Maken (Kazakhstan) to the Board of the Forum to fill the vacancy for a male representative from the Eurasia Group.

The Governing Council took note of the activities of committees and other bodies.

Item 12 of the agenda

138th IPU ASSEMBLY

The President said that the 138th IPU Assembly would take place in Geneva from 24 to 28 March 2018, adding that the 139th Assembly would likewise be held in Geneva.

Item 13 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS

(CL/201/13-P.1)

(a) Statutory meetings

The Secretary General, recalling that the Executive Committee had examined an invitation received from the Parliament of Argentina to host an Assembly in 2019, said that the mission dispatched to Argentina in June to examine the available facilities had concluded that the necessary political and administrative support was in place. The Executive Committee therefore recommended provisional approval of the invitation, pending receipt of a firm guarantee from the Argentine authorities that all invitees to the Assembly would be granted entry visas. Were the invitation to receive final approval, the Assembly would take place in Buenos Aires from 6 to 10 April 2019.

The Governing Council provisionally approved the invitation to hold the 140th IPU Assembly in Buenos Aires, Argentina pending the receipt of guarantees regarding the issuance of entry visas to all delegates.

(b) Specialized meetings and other events

The Secretary General drew attention to the list of specialized and other meetings set out in document CL/201/13-P.1, some of which had already been approved by the Council. The remaining meetings for which Council approval was now sought were funded either from external sources or the regular budget and therefore entailed no additional financial implications for the IPU.

The Governing Council approved the list of specialized and other meetings.

Item 14 of the agenda

APPOINTMENT OF TWO INTERNAL AUDITORS FOR THE 2018 ACCOUNTS

(CL/201/14-P.1)

(cf. Rule 41 of the Governing Council)

The President, referring to the candidature received, as detailed in document CL/201/14-P.1, for one of the two posts of Internal Auditor for the 2018 accounts, said he took it that the Council wished to appoint Mr. V. Macedo (Portugal) to the post.

It was so decided.

Item 16 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(CL/201/16-P.1 to P.4)

(cf. Article 21 (k) of the Statutes and Rules 37, 38 and 39 of the Rules of the Governing Council)

The President, referring to the candidatures received, as detailed in documents CL/201/16-P.1 to P.4, to replace the four membership vacancies on the Executive Committee, said he took it that the Council wished to elect as members Mr. K.M. Lusaka (Kenya) for the African Group; and Ms. M. Kiener-Nellen (Switzerland), Mr. D. McGuinty (Canada) and Ms. H. Haukeland Liadal (Norway) for the Twelve Plus Group.

It was so decided.

Item 17 of the agenda

AMENDMENTS TO THE IPU STATUTES AND RULES

The President said that the Executive Committee had examined amendments proposed by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians for lowering its quorum requirement. After a lengthy discussion, it had recommended that the Committee should review its proposal and submit a new one at the next session.

The Governing Council took note of the information provided.

Item 18 of the agenda

OTHER BUSINESS

The President concluded the session by reading out a presidential statement, available at <http://archive.ipu.org/cnl-e/201/democracy-world.pdf>, on the state of democracy in the world.

The Governing Council endorsed the presidential statement.

Mr. W. Waven (Seychelles) expressed congratulations to the President elect of the IPU, saying that her passion would further drive forward global reforms and changes through the voice of the IPU to ensure balanced decision-making, with no one left behind. He likewise saluted her distinguished fellow contestant, who would surely bring her experience and talent to bear in supporting the work of the new President to further promote the causes of the IPU, with a particular emphasis on women's empowerment.

Last but not least, he paid tribute to Mr. Chowdhury, the outgoing President, who had been a true and loyal leader, mentor and friend to the IPU Secretariat and IPU Members. An exemplary torch-bearer for the IPU, he had promoted pluralism and inclusion of the voice of the global community in working for excellence. He would be remembered in particular by the Seychelles delegation for encouraging solidarity among Members from small island developing States in highlighting the specificities, differences and vulnerabilities that must be taken into account in global decision-making in order to prevent unintended consequences for the survival of those States. He wished Mr. Chowdhury well in his future undertakings.

The President thanked the speaker for his kind words and declared closed the 201st session of the Governing Council.

The session rose at 5.50 p.m.