



Inter-Parliamentary Union

Technical Cooperation Programme

EXPLORATORY MISSIONS: ARGENTINA



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In 2001 several political and administrative reforms were undertaken by the Argentinean authorities in order to help overcome the economic crisis and facilitate a return to a stable democracy. One of the reformed institutions was the Senate, the Upper House of the Parliament of Argentina.

Following a request from the Argentinean Senate, an exploratory mission took place in Buenos Aires from 4 to 17 of May. It was conducted by Dr. Francisco José Bolio, former Speaker of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies and Mr. Fernando Santaolalla, a senior official of the Spanish Chamber of Deputies.



The mission's objectives were to study the procedures of both Houses of Parliament, and to provide advisory assistance in the context of its Administrative Reform Commission. In that regard, the mission would assist the Commission in identifying proposals intended to improve the administrative and financial working methods of the Senate with a view to strengthening its capacity to reform its legislative, oversight and representative functions efficiently. The mission was also entrusted with the task of helping the Commission prepare a strategy for implementing the reform proposals, including identification and mobilization of the necessary resources.

The following is a brief summary of the mission's findings:

- Several proposals for the administrative reform of the parliament's were made. It was suggested to merge the libraries and parts of the administration of both Houses, in order to reduce the extremely high number of employees (12, 000) and achieve greater efficiency.
- Furthermore, the mission suggested that a more transparent system of recruiting and promoting employees be introduced to make working for the parliament more attractive and improve overall staff quality.

In addition to those technical aspects of the parliament's work, the mission also dealt with political and constitutional questions. The following problems inter alia were addressed:

- An excessive number of committees in both Houses. In the Senate alone, the mission counted 47 permanent committees in addition to several select committees. That meant that delegates, often sitting on more than one committee, would not be able to attend parallel meetings, there was an overlap of responsibilities and the authority of committee chairs was reduced by the proliferation of similar posts. The mission therefore proposed to reduce the number of committees and clearly define their competences.
- The inability of the secretary general of the Senate to effectively work as an impartial head of the Houses, due to political party interests. The mission proposed to change the current system.
- The absence of a system to effectively allocate speaking time proportionally to group size in parliament. The mission proposed to change the rules of procedure to avoid filibustering.
- The absence of a coherent strategy to deal with the mass media and to open up the Congress to the public. It was proposed that the Congress develop such a strategy and consider the creation of a parliamentary TV channel to ensure that media coverage focused on parliamentary activity instead of generally condemning the Congress.
- The under-representation of women in Congress. In general terms, the mission suggested identifying ways and means of making the gender ratio more equitable.

The Congress of Argentina therefore was advised on how to effectively reform its administration and its rules of procedure to contribute to stability and prosperity.

