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IPU Committee on
United Nations Affairs

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REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE ADVISORY GROUP OF THE IPU COMMITTEE ON UNITED NATIONS AFFAIRS

IPU Headquarters, Geneva, 18 July 2008

1. At the start of the meeting, Mr. Finn Martin Vallersnes (Norway) was elected Chairperson of the Advisory Group. Senator Rosario Green (Mexico) was elected Deputy Chairperson.

Field Mission to Tanzania

2. The Advisory Group discussed preparations for a field mission to one of the pilot countries of the "Delivering as One" Strategy. It was decided that the field mission would take place in Tanzania on 8-10 September 2008. The principal objective of the mission would be to provide parliamentary support to the UN process of system-wide coherence and enhanced delivery of assistance at the national level. The mission proposes to examine how the United Nations is making changes on the ground and how parliament can best interact with the United Nations. In particular, the Advisory Group will assess the manner in which assistance from the United Nations, the World Bank, IMF and bilateral donors is reflected in the national budget submitted to parliament for discussion and approval.

3. The Advisory Group underscored that its primary counterpart for the field visit would be the Parliament of Tanzania, which would be fully involved in the mission's preparation, proceedings and follow-up. The mission would begin with discussions and consultations in parliament with a view to gathering information about parliamentary involvement in the "Delivering as One" process. Representatives from the parliament would join the mission in all of its subsequent meetings in the country. The fact-finding aspect of the mission would thus be inseparable from the endeavour to consolidate the role and responsibility of the national parliament in relation to development cooperation and UN operations in general.

4. In discussing the UN documents on "Delivering as One", the Advisory Group noted that little mention is made of the role of parliament in the process. This reflects the serious gap in transparency and accountability that UN operations continue to face, and hence the weak ownership by national authorities. Bringing relevant expertise into the country, including technical assistance that can help consolidate capacities within national parliaments, is a challenge that demands an adequate response.

5. During the field mission to Tanzania, the members of the Advisory Group would meet with a wide variety of officials and stakeholders, including:

- The Speaker and members of the National Assembly of Tanzania, including chairs of relevant parliamentary committees;
- The United Nations Resident Coordinator – leader of the United Nations country team;
- Heads of Country Teams of UN agencies, funds and programmes;
- Representatives of the World Bank and IMF;
- Ministers and other representatives of concerned national authorities;
- Other development partners, including bilateral donors and civil society representatives.

6. The report of the field visit to Tanzania will be submitted for discussion and action by the IPU Committee on UN Affairs when it meets in Geneva on 13-15 October 2008.

IPU Survey on parliaments and the United Nations

7. The Advisory Group discussed a draft Survey prepared by the IPU Secretariat on how national parliaments organize their work vis-à-vis the United Nations, and proposed amendments and additions to the draft. The Survey is structured in three parts. It seeks to determine the manner in which parliaments relate to the UN agenda and the General Assembly, the manner in which parliaments interact with specific meetings and negotiating processes at the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, and how parliaments work with UN country offices at the national level. The Survey will be finalized in early September and circulated to national parliaments. Its findings will be discussed by the IPU Committee on UN Affairs at a future meeting.

8. The Advisory Group also received a briefing on the IPU's work to map the international architecture of parliamentary bodies – regional organizations and networks – bringing together legislators from different countries. The Advisory Group examined a draft concept paper on creating an open, on-line database – similar to the PARLINE system – on international parliamentary assemblies, organizations and networks. Such a database would benefit the IPU as it seeks to develop a more comprehensive and proactive policy in forging a parliamentary dimension and response to major global issues. It could also be of use to members of parliament and their supporting staff, as well as to political science researchers, university students, members of the diplomatic corps, the media and the general public from all corners of the world. As this project carries financial implications, it will need to be presented to the IPU governing bodies for their approval.

Preparations for the 63rd session of the UN General Assembly

9. The Advisory Group was informed that the IPU and UN Secretariats were working together on the 2008 Report of the UN Secretary-General on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The Report will be issued in September and made available to parliaments in advance of the 119th IPU Assembly. As in past years, the conclusions and recommendations of the Report will serve as the main elements for the corresponding Resolution of the UN General Assembly, to be adopted during its 63rd session. National parliaments will be encouraged to work closely with their Foreign Ministries, so as to ensure broad support by UN member States for the respective Resolution.

10. As the 63rd session of the General Assembly gets under way, the IPU is encouraging members of parliament to join their national delegations to the opening session. This year's general debate takes place from 23 September to 3 October and coincides with two high-level discussions on Africa's development needs (22 September) and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (25 September). The IPU will be convening a lunch-time discussion with participating MPs on Friday, 26 September, which will allow for an inter-active session among legislators and an exchange of views with the incoming President of the General Assembly.

11. The Advisory Group also took stock of preparations for the 2008 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, convened jointly by the President of the IPU and the President of the UN General Assembly. This year's meeting is entitled *Towards effective peacekeeping and the prevention of conflict: delivering on our commitments*. Background documentation on the key issues under consideration will be circulated in advance of the Hearing, and parliaments are encouraged to participate actively. The Report of the joint UN-IPU session will be submitted as a contribution to the work of the General Assembly and will be made available to UN member States and national parliaments.

Agenda of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs (Geneva, October 2008)

12. The Advisory Group discussed the agenda for the upcoming session of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs. On that occasion, the Committee will take stock of the Report of the UN Secretary-General on cooperation between the United Nations and IPU. It will hear the report of the field mission to Tanzania and discuss modalities to enhance the role of parliament in development cooperation and in overseeing the delivery of development aid. The Committee will also be informed of the conclusions of the Global Forum on HIV and AIDS, to be held in Mexico in early August.

13. In terms of its thematic discussion, the Advisory Group proposed that the Committee focus on the question of food security, including from the perspective of its health implications. To this end, it is proposed that the IPU invite the executive head of the World Food Program or the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), depending on availability, as well as the Director General of the World Health Organization, to address the Committee. Their presentations would be followed by a question and answer session. Building on the IPU's work in the area of international migration, the Advisory Group also proposed that a one-hour hearing be held with the new Director General of the International Organization for Migration, based in Geneva.

PARTICIPANTS

- . Mr. G. Versnick (Belgium)
- . Mr. M. Traoré (Burkina Faso)
- . Mr. D. Dzembritzki (Germany)
- . Mr. C. O'Connor (Ireland)
- . Ms. R. Green (Mexico)
- . Mr. T.B. Gurirab (Namibia)
- . Mr. F.M. Vallersnes (Norway)
- . Ms. A. Inayatullah (Pakistan)
- . Mr. V. Likhachev (Russian Federation)
- . Ms. N.C. Madlala-Routledge (South Africa)