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## IS PARLIAMENT OPEN TO WOMEN? AN APPRAISAL

### *Fourth Conference for Members of Parliamentary Committees on the Status of Women and other Committees Dealing with Gender Equality*

Geneva, 28-29 September 2009

Dear Madam Speaker,  
Dear Mr. Speaker,

As part of its efforts to strengthen the capacity of parliaments to promote gender equality, the Inter-Parliamentary Union organizes an annual conference for chairpersons and members of parliamentary committees dealing with the status of women and gender equality. This year's conference, which will take place on 28 and 29 September, will focus on the theme, *Is Parliament Open to Women? An Appraisal*.

The theme of women's access to and participation in parliaments is timely in the run-up to the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action commits states to promote gender equality and to increase women's participation in decision-making bodies. The Conference will appraise progress made in terms of women's parliamentary participation across the world since Beijing, and take stock of concrete steps and special measures that have been taken to open parliaments up to the participation of women. The role of political parties, the influence of money in politics and the effects of quotas and electoral systems will be considered, together with the ways in which women parliamentarians are changing politics and redefining political priorities to include the concerns and priorities of women.

The two-day event will provide a forum for members of parliament to debate and take stock of progress made, and identify future priorities for realising the goal of equality in politics. The topics on the agenda will be introduced by members of parliament and/or experts and representatives of the international community. As in the past, the emphasis will be on discussion, and every effort will be made to provide ample time for a free exchange of views. Interpretation into Arabic, English, French and Spanish will be provided.

All national parliaments are invited to this event. It is proposed that delegations be composed of two parliamentarians who are members of committees dealing directly or indirectly with the status of women and gender equality issues or who are experts in this field, along with their advisers. Where possible, the principle of gender balance should be respected in the composition of delegations.

We will be sending the agenda and organizational details as soon as they have been finalized. Meanwhile, we are pleased to attach a registration form. I would like to point out that participants should handle all matters relating to their visas, hotel accommodation and transportation. To facilitate hotel bookings, I am enclosing a reservation form which participants may wish to use. Information on this meeting is available at [www.ipu.org/splz-e/gender09.htm](http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/gender09.htm).

We look forward to receiving your delegation in Geneva at this event.

Yours sincerely,

Anders B. Johansson  
Secretary General