



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

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**INFORMATION SEMINAR ON THE STRUCTURE
AND FUNCTIONING OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

**Office of the
Secretary General**

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

Every year, the IPU organizes an information seminar for parliamentary staff who serve as Secretaries of IPU Groups within Member Parliaments. The seminar is intended to provide them with an opportunity to acquire in-depth knowledge of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and therefore to facilitate their work in advising and assisting their parliament and its members on all matters relating to the IPU, its programmes and activities, structures and working methods.

This year's Information Seminar on the Structure and Functioning of the Inter-Parliamentary Union will be conducted in English and held from 16 to 19 May 2017.

You will find enclosed a provisional work programme as well as an information note, including conditions for participation. Please note that the candidates must have a good command of English to be able to follow and fully participate in the work of the Seminar. Similarly, kindly note that their respective parliaments are expected to cover the costs of their travel, accommodation and living expenses in Geneva.

If your parliament was recently affiliated to the IPU and is seeking to build a solid base to assist its members in the work and activities of the organization, if it has just appointed a new Secretary for whom it wishes to receive IPU-specific training, or if it wants to strengthen the professional staff support it already enjoys, I strongly recommend that you consider taking advantage of this programme.

I look forward to hearing from you about whether your parliament would like to participate in this Seminar. If so, may I invite you to nominate one candidate as soon as possible (by 10 April 2017 latest), since there is a limited number of places available.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Chungong
Secretary General



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Information Seminar on the Work and Functioning of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME AND CALENDAR OF WORK

IPU Headquarters – The House of Parliaments
16 to 19 May 2017

Monday, 15 May 2017

Arrival of participants: Welcome at Geneva-Cointrin airport

Tuesday, 16 May 2017

09.30

- Welcome of participants at IPU Headquarters
- Introduction of participants and outline of their expectations of the Seminar

10.00

- Overview of the IPU: Historical origins, major trends and developments, the IPU today and tomorrow
- IPU Strategy for 2017-2021 and its implementation

11.00

- Membership and questions regarding affiliation and suspension of Members
- Structure and functioning of IPU statutory bodies
- IPU Assemblies: Organization and outcome
- Roles and responsibilities of IPU Members, including the annual reporting exercise

13.00

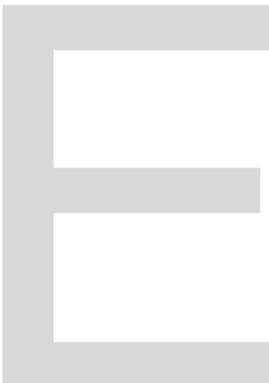
Lunch hosted by the Secretary General in honour of the participants

14.30

Group Photo and Visit of the House of Parliaments

15.30

- Overview of the IPU's work to promote democracy
- The development of standards and norms for democratic practice
- Comparative research on challenges facing parliaments
- PARLINE database on national parliaments



Wednesday, 17 May 2017

09.30

- Capacity-building and technical assistance to parliaments

11.00

- IPU Gender Partnership Programme
- IPU Youth Participation Programme

13:00

Lunch break

14.30

- The parliamentary dimension to international cooperation
- Interaction with the United Nations, including the parliamentary contribution to the shaping of the next generation of development goals
- Parliamentary Conference on the WTO
- Development cooperation and IPU work on global health issues

16.00

- Promotion of international humanitarian law
- Promotion of peace and democracy in the Middle East
- Parliamentary diplomacy

Thursday, 18 May 2017

09.00

- IPU Programme for the defence and promotion of human rights
- IPU engagement with the UN Human Rights Council

11.00

- IPU Communications Strategy

12.00

Lunch break

13.00

Departure for the United Nations Office, Geneva

14.00 – 15.00 (afternoon free at the end of visit)

Visit of the United Nations

Participation in the visit should be confirmed by Tuesday afternoon, at the latest

Friday, 19 May 2017

09.00

- Presentation of the IPU's budget
- Members' contributions and matters relating to IPU staff
- Question and answer session

10.30

- Contribution by Members to the work of the IPU
- Follow-up to IPU decisions and resolutions

12.00

Closing session:

- Assessment of the Seminar: Views and suggestions from participants

Cocktail for Seminar participants, IPU Headquarters



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Information Note

The Seminar is intended to offer IPU Group Secretaries or other persons whose work is directly related to the IPU an opportunity to acquire a more in-depth knowledge of the working of the IPU, so that they may more effectively assist their parliament and its members, particularly during IPU meetings.

It specifically targets Secretaries of recently affiliated Members that are seeking to build a solid base of dialogue and interaction with the IPU, as well as newly appointed Secretaries wishing to familiarize themselves with the structure and functioning of the IPU.

It also allows the IPU Secretariat to become better acquainted with the characteristics, functioning and possible needs of the different Members and to envisage, through active dialogue with the participants, ways to better meet Members' expectations.

Working language

The 2017 Seminar will be conducted in English. It is a highly interactive event, which means that participants must be able to express themselves fluently in English.

Number of participants and registration

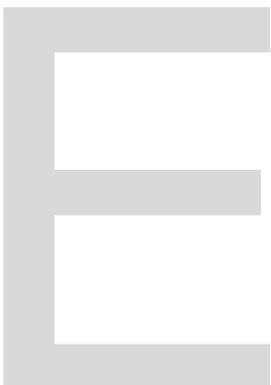
Member Parliaments may register one person only. Depending on the candidatures received, priority will be given to recently affiliated Members and to newly appointed Secretaries of delegations. Parliaments are requested to inform the IPU Secretariat in Geneva of their interest in participating as soon as possible so that a place may be reserved for them.

Requests for registration should be accompanied by a brief curriculum vitae (maximum one page) of the person concerned, specifying the functions s/he performs in the service of the Member Parliament and providing evidence of fluency in English.

Conditions for participation

Member Parliaments are responsible for covering the travel, accommodation and living expenses of their participants. For information: the official daily subsistence allowance (DSA) (including accommodation) determined by the United Nations for Geneva was US\$ 361 (CHF 370) on 1 January 2017.

The IPU Secretariat has pre-booked a limited number of rooms at three hotels in Geneva, the Ibis Budget Genève – 2-star (CHF 133.50 per night including breakfast), Ibis Genève Centre Nations – 3-star (CHF 185 per night including breakfast) and the Warwick Hotel – 4-star, (CHF 230, without breakfast). Please contact the Secretariat (Ms. Tara Staub – ts@ipu.org) if you would like to reserve one of these rooms. May is a very busy month in Geneva and the booking conditions are very strict. Participants are therefore advised to reserve rooms as soon as possible and before the deadlines stated in the respective booking forms. After these dates, the preferential negotiated rates will no longer be available and the rooms will be released.



Visas

Switzerland is an Associate Member of the Schengen Agreement and is therefore part of the Schengen area. In October 2011, the signatories to the Agreement introduced the Visa Information System (VIS), which stores biometric data (fingerprints and image of the face) of Schengen visa applicants. All the Swiss diplomatic and consular missions abroad are now connected to the VIS system.

Visa applicants are required to make an appointment with the Swiss diplomatic or consular mission that serves the area where they live (and in certain cases, with an external service provider) at which they will submit their visa application and register their biometric data in person. This data remains valid in the VIS system for five years.

The Swiss diplomatic or consular missions that serve the areas where applicants live can be found at: www.eda.admin.ch/eda/fr/home/laender-reise-information.html.

We recommend that applicants contact the relevant mission **without delay** in order to submit their visa application. In general, the following documents are required:

- An application form for a type C Schengen visa (short stay), correctly filled in and signed by the applicant. The form, as well as useful additional information about visas is available at www.sem.admin.ch/sem/fr/home/themen/einreise.html.
- Valid travel document and a copy of it. The document should be valid for at least three months after the applicant's return date, and should have been issued within the last 10 years.
- Two recent passport-sized photos.
- A letter of invitation from the entity in Switzerland sponsoring the visit, or a *note verbale* from the sending State, which includes the applicant's first and last names (as they appear in their passport), the reason for and length of their visit.
- Proof of an insurance policy, which is valid throughout the Schengen area and covers any potential medical expenses up to a value of EUR 30,000 (only applies to holders of ordinary passports) see: www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/rechtsgrundlagen/weisungen/visa/bfm/vhb1-version-bfm-f.pdf.
- Any additional documentation that the relevant Swiss diplomatic or consular mission requests.

Switzerland has also signed agreements with certain countries where it is not represented by a diplomatic or consular mission and these agreements may allow for visas to be issued by a Schengen State in a country where Switzerland is not represented. Participants are advised to consult the website above to find their nearest diplomatic or consular mission, and to contact them for information on the procedure to follow. After Switzerland's entry into the Schengen area, visas are no longer issued upon arrival at Geneva International Airport.

Welcome of participants

Participants who have announced their travel details (date, arrival time, flight/train number, etc.) will be met on arrival in Geneva by a member of the IPU Secretariat. Participants who have made their own arrangements with their Consulates/Missions or friends to be met on their arrival in Geneva are kindly requested to inform the IPU Secretariat.

Further information

For further information, please contact Ms. Sally-Anne Sader in the Division for Member Parliaments and External Relations at: + 41 22 919 41 14 or sas@ipu.org.