



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

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GRP/2016/Inf.1
26 February 2016

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 French and held from 17 to 20 May 2016.

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 French 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 and accommodation 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 Group 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 4 April 2016 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
17 to 20 May 2016

Monday, 16 May 2016

Arrival of participants: Welcome at Geneva-Cointrin airport

Tuesday, 17 May 2016

09.30

- Welcome of participants
- Introduction of participants and outline of their expectations of the Seminar

10.30

- Overview of the IPU: Historical origins, major trends and developments, the IPU today and tomorrow
- IPU Strategy for 2012-2017 and the way ahead for the revised Strategy: 2018-2023
- Membership and questions regarding affiliation and suspension of Members
- Structure and functioning of IPU statutory bodies

12.30

Lunch hosted by the Secretary General in honour of the participants

14.00

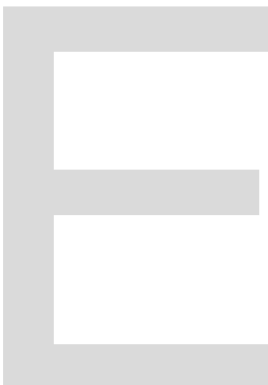
Visit of the House of Parliaments

15.00

- Overview of the IPU's work to promote democracy
- The development of standards and norms for democratic practice
- Capacity-building and technical assistance to parliaments

17.00

- Comparative research on challenges facing parliaments
- PARLINE database on national parliaments



Wednesday, 18 May 2016

09.00

- IPU Assemblies: Organization and outcome
- Roles and responsibilities of IPU Members, including the annual reporting exercise
- Reform of IPU structures, follow-up of decisions and resolutions

11.00

- IPU Communications Strategy

12.30

Lunch break

14.00

Group photo

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 and specialized meetings
- 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, 19 May 2016

09.00

Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU

10.00

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

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, 20 May 2016

09.00

- Gender Partnership Programme
- IPU Campaign: *Parliaments taking action on violence against women*

11.00

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

12.30

Lunch break

14.00

- Closing session - Assessment of the Seminar: Views and suggestions from participants

15.00

Closing 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 2016 Seminar will be conducted in French. It is a highly interactive event, which means that participants must be able to express themselves fluently in French.

Number of participants and registration

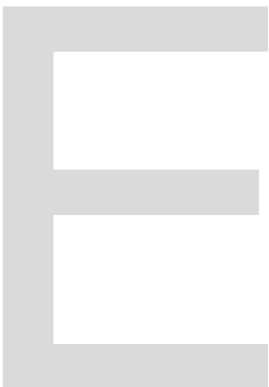
Member Parliaments may register one person only. Depending on the candidatures received, priority will be given to recently affiliated Members and to newly appointed Secretaries of delegations. Parliaments are requested to inform the IPU Secretariat in Geneva of their interest in participating as soon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

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\$ 365 (CHF 355) on 1 December 2015.

The IPU Secretariat has pre-booked a limited number of rooms at two hotels in Geneva, the Ibis Budget Genève – 2-star (CHF 118 plus tax per night without breakfast) and the Ibis Genève Centre Nations – 3-star (CHF 185 per night including breakfast). Please contact the Secretariat (Ms. Tara Staub – ts@ipu.org) if you would like to reserve one of these rooms. The month of May is a very busy month in Geneva and booking conditions are very strict. Participants are therefore advised to reserve rooms as soon as possible in order to benefit from the preferential negotiated rates.



Visas

Switzerland is an associate member of the Schengen Agreement and part of the Schengen area. On 11 October 2011, the Schengen Member States introduced the Visa Information System (VIS), which is used to store biometric data (fingerprints and facial image) of Schengen visa applicants. All Swiss embassies and consulates are gradually being connected to the VIS system.

All visa applicants are required to make an appointment with the Swiss embassy/consulate and submit and register their biometric data in person. This data remains valid in the VIS system for a period of five years.

An official document explaining the implementation of the VIS system, registration of biometric data and the rollout timetable for Swiss embassies/consulates connected to the VIS system is available at www.bfm.admin.ch/content/bfm/en/home/themen/einreise/einfuehrung_vis.html.

Schengen regulations impose longer deadlines for the issuance of a visa. As a result, delegations are requested to submit their applications by **8 April 2016**. The Swiss authorities cannot guarantee that visas will be issued for late applications.

The time needed to obtain a visa depends greatly on local circumstances. In addition to this, Switzerland has signed agreements with certain countries where it is not represented by a diplomatic or consular entity. Under certain conditions, these agreements allow for the issuing of visas by a Schengen State in a country where Switzerland is not represented. It is therefore highly recommended that applicants enquire directly with the Swiss embassy/consulate in their country of residence or consult the appropriate website. Appointments for submitting and registering biometric data must therefore be taken well in advance, as per information provided by the Swiss authorities. Following 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.