



# INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Informal consultations at the United Nations General Assembly

System-wide Coherence  
Gender architecture

Statement by Ambassador Anda Filip  
Permanent Observer

New York, 16 May 2008

Check against delivery

Mr. President,

I am pleased to take the floor on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and to share with you our unique experience of building a gender equality architecture for our Organization

The IPU prides itself on its pioneering work in promoting gender equality in political and public life. We have built up one strong and cohesive programme to promote gender equality. We have deliberately chosen not to create separate programmes and units within the Organization on matters relating to gender equality. We don't think that it helps to achieve our primary objective, which is to make sure that the issue of gender equality is dealt with as an absolute priority by the Organization.

The programme we have established and which goes under the name of Partnership between Men and Women in Political Life designs and implements all IPU's gender equality activities, regardless of whether they relate to women's participation in politics, violence against women or discrimination against women, to mention but a few subjects.

The programme is accompanied by special structures and procedures to make sure that gender equality is mainstreamed within our Organization and that it receives the highest political visibility and support from our Members, the national parliaments.

One of the key structures is IPU's Gender Partnership Group. This Group is composed of two men and two women members of our Executive Committee. It is tasked with scrutinizing all of IPU's policies and work and ensuring that they respond to the needs and interests of both men and women on an equal basis. The Group reports to the Executive Committee and to our Governing Council, which is IPU's highest plenary policy making body.

The Gender Partnership Group helps shed light on areas where progress needs to be made. One area that the Group has paid particular attention to is IPU's budget. The Group has helped us analyze our budget from a gender perspective. As we should all know, budgets do not affect men and women equally, and if we are serious about promoting gender equality, then we must also understand how the budget affects gender. This is crucial in order to be able to establish clear gender priorities and ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all our work.

The Gender Partnership Group is effective because it is linked to the highest decision-making bodies of the IPU. It is also effective because it has the power to formulate and submit recommendations for action, its work is highly visible within our structure, and because it is composed of men and women.

In addition to this particular watchdog mechanism, the IPU has also established two special procedures to enforce greater equality in participation of men and women within our Organization. One of these procedures makes it mandatory for the membership of IPU's Executive Committee to be composed of at least 20% women. It also stipulates that the chairperson of the Committee that directs and oversees

IPU's Gender Partnership Programme is ex officio a member of the Executive Committee.

The second procedure is directed at our Members, the national parliaments. This procedure requires all national delegations to IPU Assemblies to be composed of members of parliament of both sexes. When national parliaments do not comply with this obligation, a system of sanctions is automatically imposed which reduces the number of members of parliament that they can accredit to an IPU Assembly. It also reduces the number of votes to which the delegation is entitled.

A similar system operates in the plenary policy making body of the IPU, the Governing Council. Parliaments that do not include both genders in their delegation to this body will find their entitlement to delegates and votes reduced from three to two.

Today, women MPs account for 30 per cent of the participants in IPU Assemblies. Some 50 years ago they only represented a mere 1.2 percent. Much of this progress is attributed to the mechanisms in place at the IPU to which I have just referred and to the growing attention placed on gender issues by the organization. Of course, the progress is also driven by a strong current of political will from within the Union, and a growing awareness of the benefits of gender equality within member parliaments.

Member states need to be politically supportive of greater participation by women within the UN's own structures. By providing political will and visibility, promoting awareness of the benefits of gender equality, working in partnership with men, ensuring that working groups and committees are gender balanced and that statistics and data are sex disaggregated, the United Nations, like the IPU, can make considerable headway. We therefore welcome the steps that are now being taken at the United Nations, for example, by making gender sensitive statistics available at the UN.

Having said that, we would strongly urge the United Nations Member States to design an ambitious agenda for change at the United Nations. In our experience, there is no shortage of competent women and the IPU has gained enormously over recent years from the greater participation of women members of parliament at our Assemblies and in all our activities. We would urge Member States to do the same and to include women in delegations to all United Nations meetings.

To conclude, Mr. President, the IPU welcomes the attention now paid to gender mainstreaming at the United Nations and you can rest assured that the IPU is committed to supporting greater coherence and the establishment of an effective gender architecture at the United Nations. Thank you.