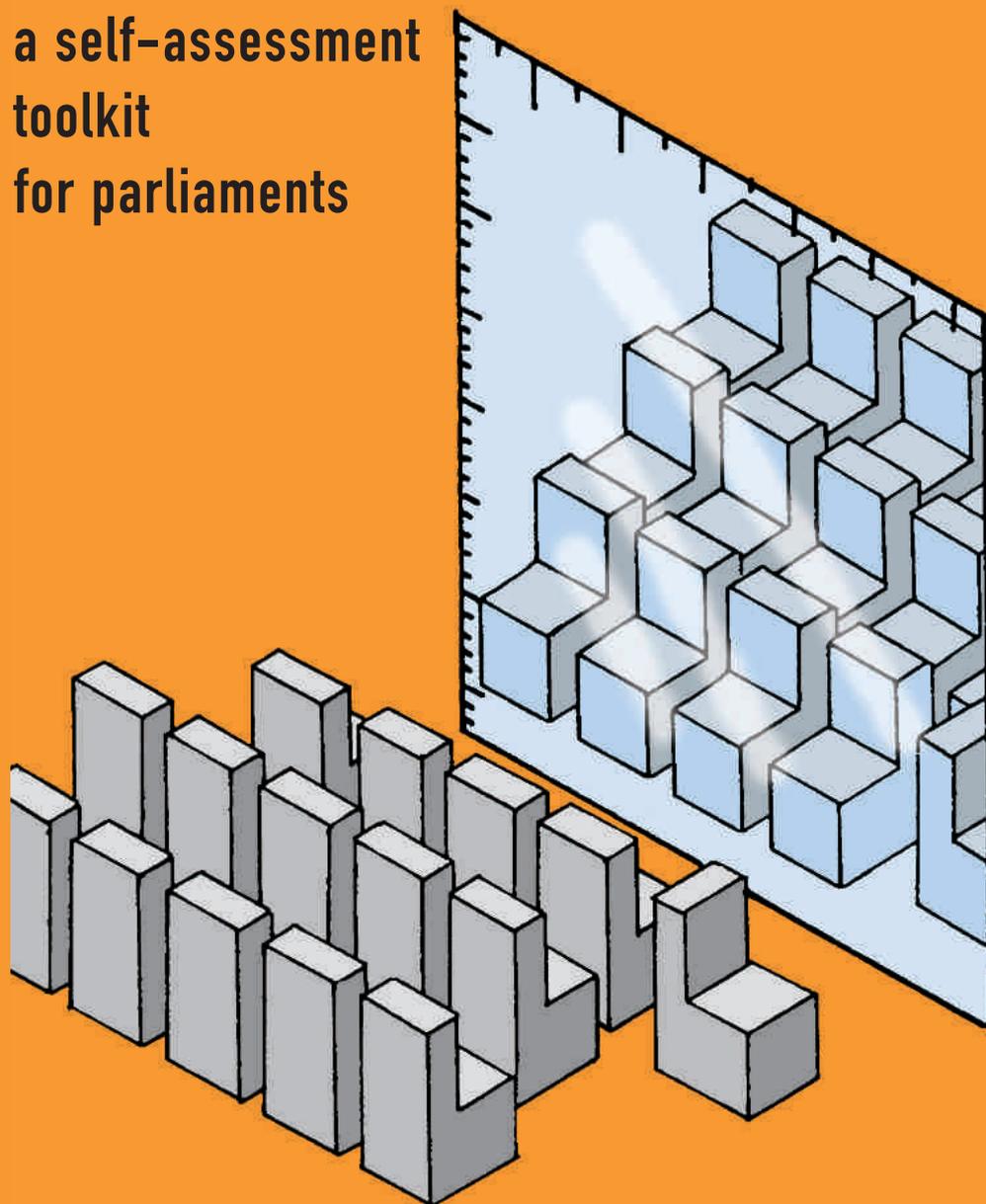


EVALUATING PARLIAMENT

a self-assessment
toolkit
for parliaments



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

2008

Evaluating parliament

A self-assessment toolkit
for parliaments

Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008

Acknowledgments

The toolkit was formulated by David Beetham and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). It draws extensively from International IDEA's State of Democracy Assessment Methodology, which has been used to conduct citizen assessments of democracy in several countries.

Our thanks go to Bruno Baufumé, Nick Bouchet, Ian Harris, Peter Lilienfeld, Friedhelm Maier, Greg Power, Keith Schulz, Patricia Tancred for their invaluable comments during the preparation of this toolkit.

This publication was edited by Marilyn Achiron and designed by Julian Knott, with cover art by Aloys Robellaz.

Copyright © Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008

All rights reserved

Printed in Switzerland

ISBN: 978-92-9142-384-2

No part of this publication may be produced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, via photocopying, recording, or otherwise – without the prior permission of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

This publication is circulated subject to the condition that it shall not by way of trade or otherwise be lent, sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than in which it is published and without a similar condition, including this condition being imposed on the subsequent publisher.

Published by Inter-Parliamentary Union

PO Box 330

1218 Le Grand Saconnex

Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 919 4150

Fax: +41 22 919 4160

E-mail: postbox@mail.ipu.org

Internet: <http://www.ipu.org>

Printed by SRO-Kundig, Geneva, Switzerland

Contents

Foreword	4
I. Introduction	5
II. How to use this toolkit	8
III. When to use this toolkit	12
IV. Checklist before beginning	16
V. The Questions	17
1. The representativeness of parliament	18
2. Parliamentary oversight over the executive	19
3. Parliament's legislative capacity	20
4. The transparency and accessibility of parliament.....	21
5. The accountability of parliament.....	22
6. Parliament's involvement in international policy.....	23
IV. Annexes	25

Foreword

Democracy in any country requires a strong parliament. Views differ, however, on the characteristics of a strong parliament since the historical, social and political context of each parliament is unique. It is therefore not surprising that there are no meaningful and universally applicable statistical or similar measurements of parliamentary performance.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union defines a democratic parliament by referring to universal values, which they should all aspire to and which retain their validity whatever the system of government. According to this definition, a democratic parliament is representative of the political will and social diversity of the population, and is effective in its legislative and oversight functions, at national and international level. Crucially, it is also transparent, accessible and accountable to the citizens that it represents.

These core values are set out in IPU's ground breaking study *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*. The study argues through examples put forward by parliaments themselves that a strong parliament is one that puts these values into practice.

The IPU is pleased to introduce this self-assessment toolkit which invites parliaments to evaluate their democratic performance against a set of criteria based on the above-mentioned values. The purpose is not to rank parliaments. It is to help parliaments to identify their strengths and weaknesses against international criteria, in order to determine priorities for strengthening the parliamentary institution.

Because the conclusions are nationally developed and owned, self-assessment has the potential to be an immensely powerful tool for change. The IPU will be pleased to assist parliaments in the self-assessment process, including the identification and implementation of such corrective measures as may be necessary.



Anders B. Johansson
Secretary General

I. Introduction

THE BASICS

The purpose of this self-assessment toolkit is to assist parliaments and their members in assessing how their parliament performs against widely accepted criteria for democratic parliaments. The toolkit can be used in many different ways, depending on the context and the actors involved. Section 3 sets out some examples of different ways in which the self-assessment can be used. Ultimately, however, all scenarios share two objectives:

- To evaluate parliament against international criteria for democratic parliaments
- To identify priorities and means for strengthening parliament

Since it is based on universal democratic values and principles, this toolkit is relevant to all parliaments, whatever political system they adhere to, whatever their stage of development.

Self-assessment is a voluntary practice. It will work best when parliament, and particularly the highest authorities of parliament, are convinced that self-assessment against international criteria can help to strengthen parliament. Self-assessment is the best way of ensuring that parliament assumes ownership of whatever findings and conclusions emerge from the exercise. Self-assessments are not used to create rankings or “league tables” of parliaments; there are no international experts sitting in judgement of parliaments. In a self-assessment, parliament itself is the principal actor and judge.

The toolkit provides a framework for discussion among members of parliament. The method involves answering questions about the nature and work of the parliament concerned. These questions are grouped under six topics:

- the representativeness of parliament;
- parliamentary oversight over the executive;
- parliament’s legislative capacity;
- the transparency and accessibility of parliament;
- the accountability of parliament;
- parliament’s involvement in international policy.

The self-assessment should be conducted by a group of people, never by one person alone. The diversity of that group is the best guarantee of the legitimacy of the self-assessment process and that the plurality of views is considered. A variety of views from within parliament is essential to achieving a constructive outcome.

Parliaments may also want to open the self-assessment to include other actors, such as political parties, civil society groups, and the media. Their participation is likely to provide valuable perspectives that may enrich the process. Each parliament will choose whether it includes external participants in the self-assessment and how it interacts with them.

It is hoped that in answering the questions, members of parliament will engage in serious and systematic discussions on issues relating to the work of parliament, even – perhaps particularly – if those discussions provoke disagreement.

The discussion should lead to a shared vision of the priorities for parliamentary development and then to recommendations for action to address these priorities. While there is great value in the democratic debate of the issues per se, the effectiveness of the self-assessment should be judged against the outcomes that emerge, in terms of parliament becoming more representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective.

Democratization is not a one-off event, but a continuing process, in both recent and long-established democracies.*

CRITERIA FOR DEMOCRATIC PARLIAMENTS

The questions contained in this toolkit are drawn from the basic assumptions and principles of democratic parliaments, and derived from what parliaments themselves see as good examples of democratic practice. These principles are most fully described in *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*. Published by IPU in 2006, the Guide offers a comprehensive account of the central role that parliament plays in a democracy.

*All quotes on the following pages are taken from *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006.

Drawing on submissions from 75 national parliaments, the Guide shows that parliaments in both recent and long-standing democracies take seriously the need to engage in a continuous process of reform to make their practices more open, accountable and responsive. The Guide builds a profile of what a democratic parliament actually looks like, and how it might better become so. It defines a democratic parliament as one that is:

- representative
- transparent
- accessible
- accountable
- effective

Each of the questions in the self-assessment toolkit covers one aspect of a democratic parliament, as elaborated in *Parliament and democracy in the twenty-first century: A guide to good practice*.

The self-assessment is based on value judgements of how parliament measures itself against each of the criteria. It is to be expected that no parliament would attain the highest score for every question since parliament, like democracy, can always be strengthened.

It thus may be helpful to refer to the Guide while undertaking a self-assessment. The Guide can be downloaded at <http://www.ipu.org/dem-e/guide.htm> or ordered from the IPU. The Guide's framework of core values and the possible means of realizing them in parliament can be found in the Annex of this publication.

Although different countries will be facing different challenges, common to them all is the centrality of parliament to the process of democratic reform...

II. How to use this toolkit

While each parliament will decide for itself how to approach the self-assessment exercise, there are some important factors to consider.

INITIATING THE PROCESS

The process can be initiated by many different actors. A self-assessment initiated or supported by the president of the parliament/chamber will carry the greatest political weight and is likely to have the most immediate impact. Self-assessment could also be initiated, for example, by a parliamentary committee, a group of parliamentarians, an individual parliamentarian or senior parliamentary staff. International partners working to build the capacity of parliament or national civil society groups may propose that parliament undertakes a self-assessment. Other external partners, such as an NGO or other civil society group, may choose to assess the parliament of their country. Whoever initiates the self-assessment, it is vital to have a shared understanding of the purpose and expected outcomes at the beginning of the process.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESS

The main participants in most self-assessments will be parliamentarians. When possible, it may be most efficient to use existing structures within the parliament to conduct the self-assessment. For example, if a parliamentary committee has a mandate to examine the reform or modernization of parliament, it may be appropriate for this committee to lead the exercise. Where no such committee exists, the process could be led by a committee that has responsibility for parliamentary procedures or similar activities. Parliament could also establish an ad hoc group to conduct the self-assessment. Ultimately, each parliament must decide on the most appropriate structure to lead the self-assessment.

The composition of the self-assessment group should reflect the broadest possible array of perspectives, including representatives of governing and opposition parties, men and women, parliamentarians and senior parliamentary officials and, should parliament decide, external representatives from civil society, etc. Sufficient resources should be allocated to the group so that it can carry out its mission.

THE QUESTIONS

The questions are grouped into six sections. The toolkit is designed so that each area of a parliament's responsibility can be assessed separately or in turn. A parliament may wish to focus on only one or two of the six sets of questions, depending on the agreed purpose of the self-assessment.

Each section contains up to 10 questions. The questions are not yes/no questions; rather, they are framed in language that asks "how far," "how much," etc. They invite respondents to make judgements on a five-point scale:

- 5 = very high/very good
- 4 = high/good
- 3 = medium
- 2 = low/poor
- 1 = very low/very poor

After considering each question, respondents simply locate the number of the question in the box below each set of questions, and record their judgements.

Three other questions follow this initial group of questions. These questions ask respondents to identify what they consider to be the greatest improvement made recently in that particular area, the most serious on-going deficiency, and what measures are required to improve performance. These conclusions are likely to form the basis of recommendations at the end of the self-assessment exercise.

A degree of flexibility has been built into the process to allow parliaments to add questions, so that respondents can consider issues that were not directly addressed in the preceding questions. Additional questions should be framed carefully to follow the format used in other questions (how effectively..., how well... etc).

THE USE OF FACILITATORS

The participation of an external facilitator may help to ensure that all members of the group share a common understanding of the purpose of the exercise and the roles they are expected to play. Recourse to external facilitators can be particularly useful in situations where there is a high degree of political polarization in parliament to help ensure that all parties and factions can participate in the exercise on an equal footing. External facilitation can be organized by IPU or other organizations.

TIMEFRAME

The timeframe in which the exercise is to be conducted should be decided at the beginning of the process. The amount of time required to complete the self-assessment will vary, depending on the purpose of the exercise and the context of the parliament. A minimum of one and a maximum of eight working sessions of the group appointed to lead the self-assessment is likely to be sufficient. The last working session should be devoted to finalizing the outcome document.

SOURCES OF DATA

Most of the questions principally require participants to make a value judgment. Nevertheless, data from internal and external sources may be helpful when considering some of the questions, such as those focusing on the representation of women or marginalized groups in parliament. Parliamentary services may be able to provide data relating to, for example, the level of public participation in the legislative process. External data sources may include the national electoral commission and public opinion surveys, such as those on the relationship between parliament and the people.

DOCUMENTING THE PROCESS

The self-assessment tool has deliberately been designed to be simple, so that only one or two priority issues that emerge from the discussions on each section are recorded. However, it is likely that the discussions will generate more analyses and suggestions than there is room to record in the toolkit itself. These additional points should be captured in a written summary of the discussion. The summaries should be prepared at the end of each session and circulated among members of the group. Audio and/or video recordings may also be helpful in keeping records of the discussions and the main ideas addressed.

OUTCOMES

Expected results should be clearly defined at the outset. In most cases, the self-assessment will lead to the preparation of a report that contains a summary of the discussions and recommendations for action. It is helpful to present an outcome document in plenary so that all parliamentarians are made aware of the findings of the self-assessment.

A template is provided as an annex to this publication to help report on the outcomes of the self-assessment.

The results that emerge after completing each section of the self-assessment can be used to create a profile of parliament that, in turn, can be used to measure the evolution of parliament over time.

PUBLICITY

Any decision to publicize the self-assessment will depend to some extent on the purpose of the exercise. There is likely to be much debate, some of it critical, once the news media engages in a discussion about the democratic quality of parliament. Yet transparency is one of the core values of a democratic parliament. Public awareness that parliament is taking the initiative to evaluate itself against international criteria will likely have a positive impact on the public's perception of parliament.

If parliament intends to publicize the findings of its self-assessment, a media strategy should be developed as early as possible in order to maximize impact.

Informing citizens about the work of parliament is not just a concern for independent media, but is a responsibility of parliaments themselves.

III. When to use this toolkit

It is up to each parliament to decide when and how to engage in self-assessment. However, there are certain times in the life of a parliament that may be particularly opportune for conducting this exercise. This section describes a number of fictional scenarios of when, why and how the toolkit could be used to carry out a self-assessment. These scenarios are given purely as an indication and should not limit its use for other purposes.

SCENARIO 1

To help prepare the parliamentary budget and strategic plan

Shortly after parliamentary elections, the newly-elected President of Parliament decides to carry out an audit of the state of parliament. The purpose of the exercise is to elicit information that will assist members in preparing the parliamentary budget and the strategic plan for strengthening parliament during the next legislature.

The President sets up an ad hoc group composed of the leaders and deputy leaders of the all the parliamentary groups. The group, supported by the parliamentary secretariat working on the strategic plan, meets for six working sessions over a one-month period. Each session is devoted to a different section of the toolkit.

The group produces a report summarizing the discussions, the main points of agreement and disagreement, and recommendations for priority areas of action. It identifies strengthening the legislative capacity of parliament as the priority for the new legislature. After further discussion of the group's findings, many of the recommendations are incorporated into the budget and strategic plan that are subsequently adopted by parliament in plenary. Each year, the President asks the same group to repeat part of the self-assessment exercise to monitor the progress of reform.

SCENARIO 2

To stimulate a parliamentary reform process

Parliamentary leaders are concerned about the level of parliament's public accountability after allegations of corruption were recently leveled at several parliamentarians. The parliamentary committee mandated to modernize parliament initiates an assessment of parliament with the aim of making concrete recommendations on how to improve public accountability. The committee invites representatives of civil society, academia and the news media to participate in the exercise as expert witnesses and asks them to submit written observations.

Using the self-assessment questions on accountability to the public as their framework, members of the committee discuss what they perceive as weaknesses and strengths in parliamentary performance. They then invite the selected external experts to a public hearing in which they ask the experts for their views and suggestions.

The committee produces a report that describes perceptions of parliament's current level of accountability, the areas of concern, and its recommendations for improving accountability. That report is incorporated into the committee's final report to the President of Parliament. Parliament decides to revise the code of conduct for members, drawing on good practices observed in other parliaments and from the debate among committee members and the external participants of the self-assessment.

SCENARIO 3

To promote gender sensitivity in parliament

Members of the parliamentary women's caucus are frustrated that the percentage of women in parliament seems stuck at 12 percent. They also know how difficult it is for them, personally, to reconcile the demands of their work as legislators, which often involves late hours and weeks away from their family homes, with their responsibilities to their partners and children. They understand why many women don't offer themselves as candidates for parliament, but believe that by introducing certain changes in parliamentary procedures, more women may be willing to stand for public office.

A group within the women's caucus decides to launch an assessment of parliament from a gender perspective, focusing on whether and how the rules governing the operation of parliament may affect the level of women's representation and participation within parliament. Members of the group meet informally several times over one month. During their last meeting they draw up proposals that include adjustments to parliament's schedule, including greater flexibility for both men and women parliamentarians, to make parliament a more "family

friendly” institution. The group presents their proposals to the full women’s caucus, which, in turn, presents the proposals to the leadership.

SCENARIO 4

To enable new members of parliament to discuss key issues

.....

The Secretary General of parliament sets aside one week before the opening of the annual session to introduce newly elected members to their new responsibilities. This induction programme includes everything from a tour of the parliament building to seminars on the fundamentals of drafting legislation.

As part of his/her effort to modernize parliament, the Secretary General has decided to devote the last day of the induction programme to a discussion on the role and performance of parliament. By that time, the new members would have acquired enough understanding of parliament’s functions and authority for them to engage in an informed debate about how to improve parliament’s performance, particularly as there are growing calls in the national news media for parliament to be more open to the public about its deliberations.

Using the self-assessment toolkit as a guide, the parliamentary leadership asks the new members to consider some of the questions from each section and to propose actions to improve parliament’s performance. Through this exercise, the leadership hopes not only to elicit viable recommendations, but also to instill enthusiasm among some of the new members to become involved in the modernization process.

SCENARIO 5

To validate the findings of a needs-assessment mission

.....

Parliament asks an international organization or donor agency for assistance in building the institution’s capacity to function more effectively. The organization conducts a needs-assessment mission over the course of two months. As part of the mission, representatives of the organization meet with the leadership of parliament and several parliamentary committees with the aim of identifying areas for reform. The organization produces a report on its findings and shares that report with the parliamentary authorities.

With the report in hand, representatives of the organization and those senior members of parliament meet again to conduct a self-assessment of parliament. Addressing each section of the toolkit in turn, participants at the meeting decide which areas need reform the most urgently and agree on a set of priorities. Those priorities, in turn, form the framework of the programme of assistance to parliament.

SCENARIO 6

To make an NGO assessment of parliament

By the People, a national NGO that focuses on building democracy, initiates an assessment of parliament's performance against international criteria. Its stated aim is to make parliament more representative of, and more responsive to, the population. The organization assembles a team composed of representatives from four other like-minded groups and three academics who specialize in political science and the philosophy and practice of democracy to conduct the exercise.

While much of the team's analysis is based on their own documentation, news sources, and parliamentary archives, the team also invites members of parliament from all parties to share their views on parliament's performance in each of the six areas of the self-assessment toolkit. During this exchange of information, ideas for reform are proposed and discussed. Representatives of *By the People* document all the discussions.

After its meeting with the parliamentarians, the team reviews the discussions and selects two priorities for reform from each of the six sections of the assessment. The ideas are chosen based on their potential for realization and on the urgency of the issue. The team produces a final report, including the 12 priorities for reform, and disseminates the report among the leadership of parliament and all members. In the following months, representatives of *By the People* regularly contact the parliamentarians who assisted them during the assessment to encourage action on the reform programme.

Of course, an NGO-led assessment of parliament can only achieve the desired results if the leadership of parliament and the NGO concerned share a common understanding of the role of parliament and what is required for the parliament to fulfil that role effectively.

IV. Checklist before beginning

There are several key questions that must be answered before the self-assessment is conducted:

- ✓ What is the purpose of the self-assessment? Does everyone involved share the same understanding?
- ✓ What is the expected outcome of the exercise?
- ✓ Who will participate in the self-assessment? Does the group represent a broad range of perspectives in parliament?
- ✓ Will the group interact with people outside parliament? If so, how will these interactions take place?
- ✓ What outcome documents will be produced? How will they be used? To whom and how will they be disseminated?
- ✓ Have sufficient resources been allocated to the self-assessment?
- ✓ Has a realistic timeframe been established for the exercise?

V. The Questions

1. The representativeness of parliament

- 1.1 How adequately does the composition of parliament represent the diversity of political opinion in the country (e.g. as reflected in votes for the respective political parties)?
- 1.2 How representative of women is the composition of parliament?
- 1.3 How representative of marginalized groups and regions is the composition of parliament?
- 1.4 How easy is it for a person of average means to be elected to parliament?
- 1.5 How adequate are internal party arrangements for improving imbalances in parliamentary representation?
- 1.6 How adequate are arrangements for ensuring that opposition and minority parties or groups and their members can effectively contribute to the work of parliament?
- 1.7 How conducive is the infrastructure of parliament, and its unwritten mores, to the participation of women and men?
- 1.8 How secure is the right of all members to express their opinions freely, and how well are members protected from executive or legal interference?
- 1.9 How effective is parliament as a forum for debate on questions of public concern?
- 1.10 Additional question:

	5	4	3	2	1
Q1.1					
Q1.2					
Q1.3					
Q1.4					
Q1.5					
Q1.6					
Q1.7					
Q1.8					
Q1.9					
Q1.10					

5 = very high/very good
 4 = high/good
 3 = medium
 2 = low/poor
 1 = very low/very poor

What has been the biggest recent improvement in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What measures would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

2. Parliamentary oversight over the executive

- 2.1. How rigorous and systematic are the procedures whereby members can question the executive and secure adequate information from it?
- 2.2. How effective are specialist committees in carrying out their oversight function?
- 2.3. How well is parliament able to influence and scrutinize the national budget, through all its stages?
- 2.4. How effectively can parliament scrutinize appointments to executive posts, and hold their occupants to account?
- 2.5. How far is parliament able to hold non-elected public bodies to account?
- 2.6. How far is parliament autonomous in practice from the executive, e.g. through control over its own budget, agenda, timetable, personnel, etc.?
- 2.7. How adequate are the numbers and expertise of professional staff to support members, individually and collectively, in the effective performance of their duties?
- 2.8. How adequate are the research, information and other facilities available to all members and their groups?
- 2.9. Additional question:

	5	4	3	2	1
Q2.1					
Q2.2					
Q2.3					
Q2.4					
Q2.5					
Q2.6					
Q2.7					
Q2.8					
Q2.9					

5 = very high/very good
 4 = high/good
 3 = medium
 2 = low/poor
 1 = very low/very poor

What has been the biggest recent improvement in the above?

.....

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

.....

What measures would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

.....

3. Parliament’s legislative capacity

- 3.1 How satisfactory are the procedures for subjecting draft legislation to full and open debate in parliament?
- 3.2 How effective are committee procedures for scrutinizing and amending draft legislation?
- 3.3 How systematic and transparent are the procedures for consultation with relevant groups and interests in the course of legislation?
- 3.4 How adequate are the opportunities for individual members to introduce draft legislation?
- 3.5 How effective is parliament in ensuring that legislation enacted is clear, concise and intelligible?
- 3.6 How careful is parliament in ensuring that legislation enacted is consistent with the constitution and the human rights of the population?
- 3.7 How careful is parliament in ensuring a gender-equality perspective in its work?
- 3.8 Additional question:

	5	4	3	2	1
Q3.1					
Q3.2					
Q3.3					
Q3.4					
Q3.5					
Q3.6					
Q3.7					
Q3.8					

5 = very high/very good
 4 = high/good
 3 = medium
 2 = low/poor
 1 = very low/very poor

What has been the biggest recent improvement in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What measures would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

4. The transparency and accessibility of parliament

- 4.1 How open and accessible to the media and the public are the proceedings of parliament and its committees?
- 4.2 How free from restrictions are journalists in reporting on parliament and the activities of its members?
- 4.3 How effective is parliament in informing the public about its work, through a variety of channels?
- 4.4 How extensive and successful are attempts to interest young people in the work of parliament?
- 4.5 How adequate are the opportunities for electors to express their views and concerns directly to their representatives, regardless of party affiliation?
- 4.6 How user-friendly is the procedure for individuals and groups to make submissions to a parliamentary committee or commission of enquiry?
- 4.7 How much opportunity do citizens have for direct involvement in legislation (e.g. through citizens' initiatives, referenda, etc.)?
- 4.8 Additional question:

	5	4	3	2	1
Q4.1					
Q4.2					
Q4.3					
Q4.4					
Q4.5					
Q4.6					
Q4.7					
Q4.8					

5 = very high/very good
 4 = high/good
 3 = medium
 2 = low/poor
 1 = very low/very poor

What has been the biggest recent improvement in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What measures would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

5. The accountability of parliament

- 5.1 How systematic are arrangements for members to report to their constituents about their performance in office?
- 5.2 How effective is the electoral system in ensuring the accountability of parliament, individually and collectively, to the electorate?
- 5.3 How effective is the system for ensuring the observance of agreed codes of conduct by members?
- 5.4 How transparent and robust are the procedures for preventing conflicts of financial and other interest in the conduct of parliamentary business?
- 5.5 How adequate is the oversight of party and candidate funding to ensure that members preserve independence in the performance of their duties?
- 5.6 How publicly acceptable is the system whereby members' salaries are determined?
- 5.7 How systematic is the monitoring and review of levels of public confidence in parliament?
- 5.8 Additional question:

	5	4	3	2	1
Q5.1					
Q5.2					
Q5.3					
Q5.4					
Q5.5					
Q5.6					
Q5.7					
Q5.8					

5 = very high/very good
 4 = high/good
 3 = medium
 2 = low/poor
 1 = very low/very poor

What has been the biggest recent improvement in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What measures would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

6. Parliament’s involvement in international policy

(See also Annex II, page 28, for additional questions on parliament’s relationship to the United Nations)

- 6.1 How effectively is parliament able to scrutinize and contribute to the government’s foreign policy?
- 6.2 How adequate and timely is the information available to parliament about the government’s negotiating positions in regional and universal/global bodies?
- 6.3 How far is parliament able to influence the binding legal or financial commitments made by the government in international fora, such as the UN?
- 6.4 How effective is parliament in ensuring that international commitments are implemented at the national level?
- 6.5 How effectively is parliament able to scrutinize and contribute to national reports to international monitoring mechanisms and ensuring follow-up on their recommendations?
- 6.6 How effective is parliamentary monitoring of the government’s development policy, whether as “donor” or “recipient” of international development aid?
- 6.7 How rigorous is parliamentary oversight of the deployment of the country’s armed forces abroad?
- 6.8 How active is parliament in fostering political dialogue for conflict-resolution, both at home and abroad?
- 6.9 How effective is parliament in inter-parliamentary cooperation at regional and global levels?
- 6.10 How far is parliament able to scrutinize the policies and performance of international organizations like the UN, World Bank and the IMF to which its government contributes financial, human and material resources?
- 6.11 Additional question:

	5	4	3	2	1
Q6.1					
Q6.2					
Q6.3					
Q6.4					
Q6.5					
Q6.6					

	5	4	3	2	1
Q6.7					
Q6.8					
Q6.9					
Q6.10					
Q6.11					

5 = very high/very good; 4 = high/good; 3 = medium; 2 = low/poor; 1 = very low/very poor

What has been the biggest recent improvement in the above?

What is the most serious ongoing deficiency?

What measures would be needed to remedy this deficiency?

VI. Annexes

ANNEX I

Framework: The parliamentary contribution to democracy

Basic objectives or values. A parliament that is:	Requirements	Possible procedural and institutional means for the realisation of these objectives or values
Representative	An elected parliament that is socially and politically representative, and committed to equal opportunities for its members so that they can carry out their mandates.	<p>Free and fair electoral system and process; means of ensuring representation of/by all sectors of society with a view to reflecting national and gender diversity, for example by using special procedures to ensure representation of marginalised or excluded groups.</p> <p>Open, democratic and independent party procedures, organisations and systems.</p> <p>Mechanisms to ensure the rights of the political opposition and other political groups, and to allow all members to exercise their mandates freely and without being subjected to undue influence and pressure.</p> <p>Freedom of speech and association; guarantees of parliamentary rights and immunities, including the integrity of the presiding officers and other office holders.</p> <p>Equal opportunities policies and procedures; non-discriminatory hours and conditions of work; language facilities for all members.</p>
Transparent	A parliament that is open to the nation and transparent in the conduct of its business.	<p>Proceedings open to the public; prior information to the public on the business before parliament; documentation available in relevant languages; availability of user-friendly tools, for example using various media such as the World Wide Web; the parliament should have its own public relations officers and facilities.</p> <p>Legislation on freedom of/access to information.</p>

Basic objectives or values. A parliament that is:	Requirements	Possible procedural and institutional means for the realisation of these objectives or values
Accessible	Involvement of the public, including civil society and other people's movements, in the work of the parliament.	<p>Various means for constituents to have access to their elected representatives.</p> <p>Effective modes of public participation in pre-legislative scrutiny; right of open consultation for interested parties; public right of petition; systematic grievance procedures.</p> <p>Possibility for lobbying, within the limits of agreed legal provisions that ensure transparency.</p>
Accountable	Members of parliament who are accountable to the electorate for their performance in office and for the integrity of their conduct.	<p>Effective electoral sanction and monitoring processes; reporting procedures to inform constituents; standards and enforceable code of conduct.</p> <p>Adequate salary for members; register of outside interests and income; enforceable limits on and transparency in election fundraising and expenditure.</p>
Effective		
At all levels	Effective organisation of business in accordance with these democratic norms and values.	<p>Mechanisms and resources to ensure the independence and autonomy of parliament, including parliament's control of its own budget.</p> <p>Availability of non-partisan professional staff separate from the main civil service.</p> <p>Adequate unbiased research and information facilities for members; parliament's own business committee; procedures for effective planning and timetabling of business; systems for monitoring parliamentary performance; opinion surveys among relevant groups on perceptions of performance.</p>

Basic objectives or values. A parliament that is:	Requirements	Possible procedural and institutional means for the realisation of these objectives or values
(a) At the national level	Effective performance of legislative and scrutiny functions, and as a national forum for issues of common concern.	<p>Systematic procedures for executive accountability; adequate powers and resources for committees; accountability to parliament of non-governmental public bodies and commissions.</p> <p>Mechanisms to ensure effective parliamentary engagement in the national budget process in all its stages, including the subsequent auditing of accounts.</p> <p>Ability to address issues of major concern to society; to mediate in the event of tension and prevent violent conflict; to shape public institutions that cater for the needs of the entire population.</p> <p>For parliaments that approve senior appointments and/or perform judicial functions: mechanisms to ensure a fair, equitable and non-partisan process.</p>
(b) In relation to the international level	Active involvement of parliament in international affairs.	<p>Procedures for parliamentary monitoring of and input into international negotiations as well as overseeing the positions adopted by the government; mechanisms that allow for parliamentary scrutiny of activities of international organisations and input into their deliberations; mechanisms for ensuring national compliance with international norms and the rule of law; inter-parliamentary cooperation and parliamentary diplomacy.</p>
(c) In relation to the local level	Cooperative relationship with state, provincial and local legislatures.	<p>Mechanisms for regular consultations between the presiding officers of the national and sub-national parliaments or legislatures on national policy issues, in order to ensure that decisions are informed by local needs.</p>

ANNEX II**Additional questions on Parliament's involvement in international (foreign) policy**
.....

Respondents may wish to consider the following questions regarding its relationship with the United Nations when answering the questions in section 6:

- Is there any special committee or entity in parliament with a specific mandate to monitor and follow up on matters relating to the United Nations and if so, which body and what mandate does it have?
- Is parliament informed on government instructions (mandate) given to its permanent representative on the items on the UN General Assembly agenda?
- Are members of parliament included, as a matter of course, in government delegations to the UN General Assembly or other multilateral fora?
- Do members of parliament accompany ministers to negotiations and do they have access to the negotiating rooms (for instance at the WTO where negotiations generally take place in the so-called green room to which few people have access)?
- Do ministers receive specific negotiating mandates for international negotiations from parliament and if so, is a mechanism for monitoring and accountability in place?
- Do ministers report to parliament on progress in international negotiations?
- Are national reports to international monitoring mechanisms of international conventions and agreements reviewed, debated and approved in parliament before submission?
- Are the recommendations from these international monitoring mechanisms to the government also shared with parliament (eg recommendations of the UN Committee on Human Rights)?
- Who controls decision-making on the composition of parliamentary participation in delegations to multilateral fora: is it the Standing/Portfolio Committee with jurisdiction over the subject matter that will be discussed (for instance the gender committee for debates at the Commission on the Status of Women) or is it political parties and groups without referral to competent committees?

ANNEX III

Use this template to record the main recommendations of the self-assessment exercise.

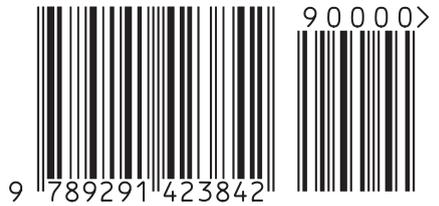
Section	Area for improvement	Possible procedural and institutional means for the realization of these improvements	Possible obstacles and ways to overcome them.
1. Representativeness of parliament			
2. Effectiveness of parliamentary oversight over the executive			
3. Parliament's legislative capacity			

Section	Area for improvement	Possible procedural and institutional means for the realization of these improvements	Possible obstacles and ways to overcome them.
4. Transparency and accessibility of parliament			
5. Accountability of parliament			
6. Parliament's involvement in international policy			

Section	Area for improvement	Possible procedural and institutional means for the realization of these improvements	Possible obstacles and ways to overcome them.
Other questions raised during the self-assessment			

NOTES

ISBN 978-92-9142-384-2



E.08.III.Z.1