

The World of Parliaments

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Inauguration of the House of Parliaments

The House of Parliaments, the new IPU Headquarters, was officially inaugurated by the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Senator Sergio Pérez, on 3rd October 2003. This event took place in the presence of the President of the Swiss National Council, Mr. Yves Christen, the Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, the President of the State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Mr. Laurent Moutinot, and other dignitaries. Many MPs attending the 109th IPU Assembly were also present.

"I wish long life to the new IPU Headquarters", declared the President of the Swiss National Council, Mr. Yves Christen. "Our Parliaments embody the 'peoples of the United Nations' and the Inter-Parliamentary Union that brings almost all of them together is a robust and sprightly centenarian ! I say 'almost all' because the absence of the United States Congress is regrettable indeed and weakens our efforts. The America of Wilson, Roosevelt, Kennedy and even Bush Senior was represented at the IPU. I need mention only one name, that of the former Senator from Florida, Claude Pepper, for whom our organization proved to be a second home where his internationalist ideals could flourish. United States Congressmen, I urge you to join with us in working to build a better world !", he said.

"I hope that in the future they will express their views even more convincingly, thus giving the concerns of civil society greater impact on the international scene"

"The House of Parliaments illustrates remarkably well the importance of the role of national parliaments in the work of international organisations. The contribution of parliaments to multi-lateral negotiations is more important



The ribbon of the inauguration of *The House of Parliaments* was cut by (from left to right) Mr. Yves Christen, Mr. Laurent Moutinot, Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey and Mr. Sergio Pérez, in the presence of Mr. Anders B. Johnsson.

than ever. I hope that in the future they will express their views even more convincingly, thus giving the concerns of civil society greater impact on the international scene", she said.

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After touring the House of Parliaments, the UN Secretary-General met with IPU staff members.

The President of the Council of State of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Mr. Laurent Moutinot, emphasised “the importance” of the IPU which “strengthens parliamentary democracy, that is, the political system which guarantees that laws reflect the people’s will in the broadest sense of the term”.

The Director General of the Office of the United Nations in Geneva, Mr. Sergueï Ordzhonikidze, read a message addressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. “In our era of globalisation and interdependence, your work to foster international cooperation among parliamentarians in the cause of peace, development and human rights, and to promote representative government and parliamentary democracy, is as important as it has ever been”. In his message, Mr. Kofi Annan said that the relation between the United Nations and the organisation of the world’s parliaments found a fitting symbol when the United Nations postal authority issued a stamp earlier this year with a depiction of the house of Parliaments. “Through letters posted to men and women everywhere, the image of this beautiful house has already been carried to all quarters of the globe. I hope that the work done in and through this house will be felt all around the world as well”.

IPU President expresses gratitude

The President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Senator Sergio Pérez, thanked the Swiss Parliament and the Government of Switzerland “which offered us a generous, interest-free loan to finance the major part of the project and subsequently gave us a further grant to help us complete it.

Our thanks also go to the Canton of Geneva, which greatly facilitated IPU’s acquisition of the Villa Gardiol and contributed financially to the restoration work. Let me also thank the city of Geneva and the commune of Grand-Saconnex for their support”.

The IPU President also expressed his gratitude to the IPU Members, especially the Parliaments of Germany, Belgium, France, Italy and the United Kingdom, which had made generous contributions to the renovation of the building, and the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which donated the magnificent carpet that adorns the main hall at the entrance of the building. He also thanked FIPOI, the Building Foundation for International Organisations, the architects Brauen & Waelchli and their partners at Techne.

The project was originally approved in 1998 by the IPU Council under the presidency of Mr. Miguel Angel Martínez. The foundation stone was laid in June 2001 by the then Council President, Dr. Najma Heptulla. The IPU Headquarters has changed countries three times :

1892-1911: Bern (Switzerland)

1911-1914: Brussels (Belgium)

1914-1920: Oslo (Norway)

since 1921, the IPU Headquarters is in Geneva:

1921-March 1926: 2, chemin de la Tour de Champel

March 1926 - May 1931: 5, place Claparède

Mars 1965 – December 2002: Place du Petit-Saconnex

Since December 2002: 5, chemin du Pommier, Le Grand-Saconnex

UN Secretary-General pays a courtesy visit to IPU Headquarters



Photo IPU/H. Saigado

UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, and IPU Secretary General, in front of the exhibition of pictures of the world's parliaments, at the new IPU Headquarters.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan paid a courtesy visit to IPU Headquarters, *The House of Parliaments*, on 9 December 2003. The visit served to reinforce the ties between the United Nations and the organisation of the world's parliaments, in the words of Mr. Kofi Annan, an important partner of the UN.

During his visit Mr. Kofi Annan and the IPU Secretary General, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, discussed preparations for the Second Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments. The UN Secretary-General also toured the new Headquarters and met with IPU staff members.

110th IPU Assembly to take place in Mexico City from 18 to 23 April 2004

At its meeting in Geneva in October, the Union's Governing Bodies had to conclude that the 110th Assembly could not be held in London as originally foreseen. Considering the enormous amount of preparations already undertaken by the British Group to ensure a successful meeting, it was with the utmost regret that the Union's Members found themselves having to take this decision.

The IPU has functioned for more than 100 years on the basic premise that membership of the Organisation entails acceptance by all its Members of the principle of dialogue between the representatives of different or even opposing political and economic systems. Putting this principle aside when organising any IPU meeting would be tantamount to violating the Union's Statutes. However, a European Union travel ban affecting certain members of the Parliament of Zimbabwe made it impossible for the British Group to guarantee the provision of visas to all delegates designated by their parliament to attend the Assembly.

In the weeks and months that followed the Geneva session, discussions took place with a view to identifying an alternative venue for the 110th Assembly. As this issue of the *World of Parliaments* goes to press, the Mexican Congress has just confirmed its invitation to host the 110th Assembly in Mexico City from 18 to 23 April 2004. □

Editorial

In the aftermath of conflicts: the need for parliamentary support

Among those who welcome parliamentary support on the multilateral scene is Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, who has appealed for support for the Rome Statute. At a panel discussion held at the recent IPU Assembly in Geneva, the Chief Prosecutor said "the Rome Statute has a powerful preventive force; it has induced legislators from all over the world to debate the place of national issues in international conventions, on subjects such as crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide".

The attention of parliamentarians has also been drawn to the democratic control of armed forces, especially since the launch in Santiago de Chile of a handbook on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector. The subject was taken up in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where a group of MPs met for a seminar in Sarajevo in September. The presentations focused on the action of security forces in special circumstances such as states of emergency. Participants discussed the oversight of human, material and financial resources, achievements and obstacles, and the question of the reform of the defence sector. It is interesting to note that the Seminar brought together parliamentarians from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska – the two entities of the country – and the national parliament. Government security experts and high ranking army officers also participated. A similar seminar was held in Skopje (former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) in October to promote the Macedonian version of the handbook, jointly published by IPU and DCAF (Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces).

Whether it is to try and prevent the outbreak of conflict or promote reconciliation in its aftermath, the legislators have proved that by committing themselves to the process, they can help to restart the difficult dialogue between communities divided by hatred. One of the topics on the agenda of the 110th Assembly, to be held in Mexico from 18 to 23 April 2004, will be international reconciliation and assistance for post-conflict reconstruction. □

L.B.

Interview with Mr. Pascal Lamy, European Union Trade Commissioner

As parliamentarians continue to closely monitor negotiations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) to conclude the Doha Round within the deadline, a specialist shared his views.

“Economic globalisation has taken trade policy out of the hands of experts and put it back in politics”

Q: Can parliamentarians play a role to help their electorates and the pressure groups gain a better understanding of the activities and importance of the WTO?

P.L. The role of parliamentarians is obviously vital in the definition, implementation and explanation of public policy. Parliamentarians are frequently grappling with citizens' concerns about globalisation, whether they concern public services, the environment, social clauses in trade, food security or cultural diversity. In other words, economic globalisation has taken trade policy out of the hands of experts and put it back in politics. The collective choices of a society are debated and formalised within parliaments. Trade policy is an interpretation of those choices. The intervention and involvement of parliamentarians is not only necessary: it is entirely legitimate if trade policy is to be democratic. Their work affects every aspect, from the definition of trade policy to the monitoring of public authorities acting on behalf of various States in the World Trade Organization. They thus have an essential role to play in informing citizens about the functioning of the global trade system and the importance of the WTO which brings all States around the same table to set the rules of the game.

Q: How can parliamentarians become more closely involved in the decisions taken by the WTO which have a direct impact on citizens' daily lives?

P.L. We will only make headway in opening up rules-based trade if we have public opinion behind us. There has to be a public debate in which parliamentarians have their say. Parliamentarians from a number of countries met at the “Parliamentary Conference on the WTO” at the recent WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun. This is an initiative that I entirely support. An inter-parliamentary dialogue on the principal subjects debated in the WTO can do nothing but good. It should improve the quality of the decisions and the legitimacy of the multilateral trade system in the eyes of the public, while ensuring that the views of the public and their collective preferences are taken into account in the WTO process. The European Commission has become accustomed to including members of the European Parliament in the official EU delegation to WTO ministerial conferences. We did so in Doha, in Cancun, and we will continue to do so in the future. With this in mind, I also pressed for the future EU Constitution to single out the role of the European Parliament in the definition of the trade policy which defends the interests of



Photo: P. H. Sagado

Mr. Pascal Lamy, European Trade Commissioner

the 15 (and soon 25) Member States of the European Union in the WTO. In my experience, more parliamentary democracy can only reinforce the positions of the negotiators. In any case, that is my feeling in the case of the European Union.

Q: The Cancun talks were a failure. How do you see future events unfolding for the Doha Round of negotiations, and do you see a role for parliaments?

P.L. It would be a grave mistake to pretend that Cancun was only a minor incident. Cancun was a political bombshell which, as I see it, should prompt all the WTO Members to review their positions in the trade talks. In the European Union, we have started a debate, firstly with the European Parliament and with the governments of the Member States, in order to check whether the foundations on which we have built our trade policy over the last few years are to remain unchanged. I would assume that other WTO Members will do the same and would also need input from their elected representatives. I also believe that it would be useful for MPs of different countries to meet among themselves to talk about how to get out of the impasse and build bridges between the diverging positions. There are a good many questions on which the negotiators need guidance. Personally, I have singled out four, to which the WTO Members must find convincing answers if we are to move forward, and the parliamentarians will certainly have something to say about them too. The first concerns the role of the WTO: should it be limited to opening up markets or should the process go hand in hand with the establishment of rules – rules which make the market-opening process genuine, and which ensure that it is responsive to other values in our societies? Second, what importance do we attach to the multilateral system as opposed to bilateral or regional initiatives? Third, we must examine the real contribution to development of more open trade, and ask ourselves if that contribution should be measured only in terms of the extent to which the poor countries are exonerated or excluded from the multilateral disciplines. Finally, we have to look at how to overhaul the working methods of the WTO so that it can perform efficiently with 148 Members. I think that all of this would provide good material for several WTO parliamentary conferences! □

Annual New York gathering focuses on security and development financing

The ECOSOC chamber at UN Headquarters saw a large turn-out on 27 October when members of parliament congregated to discuss two of the most important issues on the global agenda: security and development financing. The occasion was the annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations – an open-ended exchange of views between MPs and UN officials – that was attended this year by a record 120 MPs from some 40 parliaments. Scheduled at the beginning of the UN's High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, the meeting was also intended to facilitate the participation of MPs in the week-long UN Dialogue.

The UN's highest officials were present at the Hearing: the UN Secretary-General made the introductory remarks; Mr. Julian Robert Hunte, President of the 58th General Assembly and a senator from his native Saint Lucia, delivered a keynote speech on the subject of UN reform. Mr. Rubens Ricupero, UNCTAD Secretary General, spoke at length about the future of trade negotiations. Other panelists included Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini, President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies (on UN reform); and Mr. Kobsak Chutikul, Member of the House of Representatives of Thailand and member of the IPU-EU Post Doha Steering Committee on trade.

Breaking with its traditional format, this year's Parliamentary Hearing was redesigned to allow for presentations from MPs at the podium side by side with UN officials. An expert on financing for development, Ms. Nancy Birdsall, President of the Center for Global Development, also featured as panellist and moderator to help elucidate that broad and complex issue. These arrangements were a first step in changing the formula of the event to make it more focussed while putting the parliaments on a more equal footing with the UN. □



IPU President, Senator Sergio Pérez, was received by the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, at the UN Headquarters in New York

Photo: UN/DPA, Stephenie Holman

Global Security: some highlights from the debates

UN reform: It will take a strengthened General Assembly and an expanded Security Council, requiring nothing less than changes to the UN Charter, to make the UN more effective in meeting security challenges. Parliamentarians can and must play a role in advocating reforms.

Terrorism: It must be fought not only in its immediate manifestations but also its root causes: poverty, injustice, and the denial of people's self-determination. There are soft threats (e.g., AIDS/HIV, water shortages) and hard threats. Both must be tackled with equal determination.

Iraq: What is needed is a provisional government as in Afghanistan that would bring the occupation to an end and start the constitutional process. Elections could follow some time after the new constitution is approved. The lead up to new elections takes time and must be carefully managed.

Middle East: is the road map merely dormant or actually dead? Under the circumstances of the current stalemate, new initiatives launched by parliamentarians and other concerned individuals (like the Geneva Accords) are complementary to the road map and may actually help revive it.

Financing for Development: some highlights

Monterrey Consensus: Its implementation will depend on political will to be mobilized from the bottom up, especially in donor countries. People will never agree to increase ODA if they don't understand what it is for and if the media do not fulfill their educational function. Good governance is an indispensable condition. Corruption is one serious cause of economic inefficiency that parliaments must endeavor to eliminate in each country.

Developing countries: Their dependency on commodities, which are suffering from declining prices, is a primary cause of poverty. In the long term, the economic renewal of these countries will depend on a shift to value-added production. This must be supported by the international regime of trade, investment and finance.

Trade: It is important to take a long view on trade negotiations: history shows that perseverance pays off in the end. The 2004 UNCTAD meeting in Brazil will be an important opportunity for developed and developing countries to step back from the negotiating table and examine the various trade issues with a fresh perspective.

Capital movements: \$200 billion went from poor countries to rich ones last year alone. This highlights the extent of the problem concerning foreign investments and capital transfers that should in principle go from rich to poor. Capital transfers should go to help the productive sectors of developing countries instead.

The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court appeals to MPs

"The impact of the Rome Statute goes far beyond what happens within the court itself"

At its 109th Assembly, the IPU staged a panel discussion on "Challenges facing the International Criminal Court". The panel featured Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Mr. Jelko Kacin, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament of Slovenia, Mr. Johathan O'Donohue, Legal Advisor for Amnesty International's Justice International project, and Mr. Bill Pace, Convenor of the Coalition for the International Criminal Court.

During his interview with us, Chief Prosecutor Moreno Ocampo said that "this type of round table is unique. That's why, even though I am overloaded with work, I made a point of attending in order to brief MPs on what we do. I would like to see a permanent arrangement to keep legislators informed and provide a framework for cooperation. Many company heads from the private sector are also very interested in this subject, and would like to help us set up an extra-net system. I am very interested in working with the Union, for I would like to see it coordinate these different forces".

What role can parliamentarians play in backing the work of a court that has just come into being? Chief Prosecutor Moreno-Ocampo, of Argentina, first of all recalls that "the impact of the Rome Statute goes far beyond what happens within the court itself. The Rome Statute has a powerful preventive force; it has induced legislators from all over the world to debate the place of national issues in international conventions, on subjects such as crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide.

This typical role for legislators is very important for the Rome Statute. I also see a more operational role for parliamentarians. By definition, I am a prosecutor who acts only in exceptional cases, because I do not intervene if the national system functions. I intervene in cases where the State does not have the capacity to act, where for example the police cannot control the territory, or where the police kill people. So my job is very different from that of national prosecutors, and this is why I think there is a function missing, not only as far as prosecutors are concerned, but also with regard to legislators and politicians, if we are to change this kind of critical situation".

Mindful that his position as a prosecutor precludes political or diplomatic action, Mr. Moreno Ocampo appealed to politicians and to diplomats "to finalise the peace processes and effect the necessary transformations within society. I see a very important role for parliamentarians in this respect, not only when the Rome Statute was approved, but also in the



"Parliamentarians have a fundamental role to play in establishing bodies to promote reconciliation", as the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Mr. Luis Moreno Ocampo, said to the President of the IPU, Senator Sergio Pérez.

future". He quotes the example of Ituri in the Congo. "The Democratic Republic of the Congo recognises that it is not able to solve the problems in Ituri and that it requires international support; a mechanism is therefore necessary in order to try and bring a solution. And this mechanism cannot be set up by the prosecutor".

An appeal to the African MPs

The Chief Prosecutor's appeal is primarily aimed at African countries in the region and African countries in general. "Africa is a region which offers some striking solutions. For example, the "gayasa" is a very interesting system. The same is true of the Truth Commission set up by South Africa, which proves that Africa can offer practical solutions that can be a source of inspiration for the international community. As far as Ituri is concerned, an African solution would be ideal, and I would be very proud to contribute to it in my own modest way".

Chief Prosecutor Moreno Ocampo feels that parliamentarians also have a major role in setting up bodies to promote reconciliation. "In Ituri, there are 10,000 child soldiers. They need to go to school, and they need work. Merely judging the chiefs is not enough – far from it. The whole economic structure needs to be overhauled. Ituri is a very rich region that has gold and mineral resources. If Ituri were in Sweden, the licences to extract these resources would cost two million times as much. Why can't the politicians agree to set up a system that provides guarantees for those operating these gold mines and that ensures that the money is invested in Ituri itself, in creating jobs for the young? This is the real challenge for the politicians". □

Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector

Bosnia and Herzegovina and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia kick off a series of national Workshops on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector in Central and Eastern Europe

There is no doubt that the Handbook on "Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector", which was produced by the IPU and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF), has answered a definite need. Feedback from parliamentarians so far has indicated that this tool which helps them assume their responsibilities in overseeing such a complex and often secretive field as the security sector, where access to expertise and resources is essential, was long overdue.

Ever since the official launch at the 108th IPU Conference in April 2003, parliamentarians, particularly those from parliamentary defence committees, have expressed keen interest in using the Handbook in their work. In addition to English, French and Spanish, it has become available in a variety of other languages, first those from Central and Eastern Europe, and now Farsi, Arabic and Bahasa Indonesian.

DCAF, together with local partners and the OSCE, has started a series of national workshops in Central and Eastern Europe with IPU participation to launch and promote local language versions of the Handbook. These initiatives have taken the form of awareness-raising and training activities on this

issue of particular importance to the region which is undergoing profound civil-military transformation.

The first such Workshop took place in Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) from 17 to 19 September. Presentations dwelt in particular on action by the security sector in special circumstances such as states of emergency, and looked at oversight of human, material and financial resources, as well as achievements and obstacles, and the issue of defence reform.

The Workshop brought together parliamentarians from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic Srpska - the country's two entities - and from the national parliament. In addition, representatives from the executive dealing with security matters took part in the event, along with military officials. The discussion on oversight was thus not held in a vacuum since it included those who are the object of parliamentary monitoring. Moreover, given the strong international presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, several high-profile members of the international community were present. The Workshop, which was attended by over 90 participants, took place at a crucial point in time, as the two entities were

discussing moves towards a unified command of the army at State level, on which they agreed the following week.

A similar, though smaller, Workshop took place in Skopje (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) from 23 to 24 October to promote the Macedonian and Albanian versions of the Handbook. The event focused on all aspects of parliamentary oversight, in particular with regard to national security policy, parliamentary mechanisms concerning the security sector and "best practices" of parliamentary defence committees. A full session was dedicated to the functioning of the parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security in The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. There were some 40 participants, mainly parliamentarians and their assistants, who turned the Workshop into a lively and constructive platform for parliamentary dialogue. A range of similar national Workshops are scheduled for other countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The success of the first two such events suggests that they too will provide an opportunity for parliamentarians and others from different groups and backgrounds to understand, share and discuss this delicate yet crucial issue. □

Elections in Rwanda produce record result for women

Last September, Rwanda held its first legislative elections since its devastating conflict in 1994. Clearly, these elections held a great deal of promise for the entrenchment of democracy in the country. Somewhat unexpected, however, was the number of women swept into power: 39 of the 80 seats in the lower house were won by women, while 6 of the 20 upper house seats are now held by women.

This result has put Rwanda at the top of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's world ranking of women in national parliaments. With women comprising 48.8 per cent of the Rwandan Chamber of Deputies, the country has come the closest to reaching parity between men and women of any national legislature, and replaces the long-time champion, Sweden,

where women comprise 45 per cent of the national parliament. Women in the Transitional National Assembly of Rwanda previously accounted for 25.7 per cent of MPs.

For many Rwandans, the legitimacy of the new parliament hinged on an equal participation of men and women, as both voters and as candidates. This was reflected in the overwhelmingly endorsed Constitution, approved by 93 per cent of Rwandans earlier this year. Article 9 expresses, as a fundamental principle, the need for equality of all Rwandans and particularly between women and men, in a pluralistic democratic government. This principle is supported by a guarantee that at least 30 per cent of all posts in decision-making organs will be given to women. In fact, the Rwandan Presi-

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dent, Paul Kagame, has appointed women to 9 of 28 ministerial posts. The Constitution also includes two specific provisions about the election of women to the National Assembly: 24 of the 80 seats in the Chamber of Deputies are reserved for women, to be elected from each Province and the City of Kigali (Article 76); while the Senate is to be composed of at least 30 per cent women (Article 82).

The question of quotas

The tremendous difficulties faced by women in being elected to legislative office have been well documented by researchers and practitioners alike. With the world average of women in national parliaments at 15 per cent, various mechanisms for increasing the presence of women have been proposed, including quotas.

77 countries worldwide have implemented some kind of quota system to facilitate the entry of more women in their parliaments. Also used to increase the number of women in the private sector and at other levels of politics, quotas used at the national parliamentary level can be classified in two types: those established by national legislation, including the Constitution; and those established by political parties.

The path Rwanda has chosen is fairly radical, given the small number of countries which have opted to enter the principle of seats reserved for women in their national Constitution. In so doing, Rwanda joins other African countries such as Eritrea, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. While only 11 countries have adopted a constitutional quota, its effectiveness is underscored by the fact that the average percentage of women in these national parliaments is 21.2 per cent.

A far more common approach has been for individual political parties to adopt quotas for women. 59 countries have quotas at the party level, either to ensure that women occupy a proportion of parliamentary seats won by the party at elections, or to guarantee that internal decision-making structures include women.

Rwanda's reserved seats, as enshrined in its Constitution, will guarantee a strong proportion of women in the country's national parliament for as long as that provision remains. It is important to highlight, however, that in addition to those women elected from the provinces to the 24 reserved seats

in the lower house, Rwandan voters themselves saw fit to directly elect a further 15 women. Given 53 seats are directly elected, even without the constitutional quota, women would still have comprised a remarkable 28.3 per cent of the Chamber of Deputies.

IPU Assistance

Over the past three years, the IPU has supported the reconstruction of Rwanda, along with its UNDP partner, placing particular emphasis on the role of women in parliaments. It has organised two seminars aimed at improving women's access to the political sphere. In 2001, a seminar was held to consider means of ensuring that the new Rwandan Constitution would be gender-sensitive. The seminar brought together a number of different groups,

including members of the Transitional National Assembly, senior government ministers, members of the Legal and Constitutional Committee, and women's organisations. More importantly perhaps, the seminar triggered a popular consultation process amongst various groups of women in Rwanda, from government, parliament and civil society. Over a two-year period, these consultations produced a series of concrete recommendations aimed at entering principles of equality between men and women in the Constitution. This process ultimately produced what is now considered to be one of the most gender-sensitive constitutions in the world.

This year, the IPU, in cooperation with UNDP, organised a workshop for women candidates running in the electoral campaign. It was clear that Rwandan women were very enthusiastic about being part of the political process and that there was a general political recognition of the need to have women on board.

The road ahead

While there is no conclusive explanation for the large number of women elected to Parliament, the constitutional allocation of seats to women was a contributing factor. It will, of course, be interesting to see what the entry of so many women in the Parliament will do for politics in Rwanda. Whether this change at the decision-making level will usher in changes in the more traditional societal expectations of women remains to be seen. The success of women in politics in the Nordic countries, for example, has long been attributed to a culture which fundamentally values the equality of women in all sectors of society, be it in the world of paid work, schools and universities, or at home. Time will tell if such a culture also takes root in Rwanda. □

For more information, please see:

- IPU. *National Seminar on "Rwandan Women and the Electoral Campaign"*. Geneva, 2003.
- IPU. *National Seminar on "The Process of Engendering a New Constitution for Rwanda"*. Geneva, 2002.
- IPU. *Men and Women in Politics: Democracy Still in the Making. A World Comparative Study*. Geneva, 1997.
- IPU Web site: <http://www.ipu.org/iss-e/women.htm>
- International IDEA Web site: <http://www.idea.int/quota/index.cfm>

Increasing efficiency in the Budgetary Process: the South West Asian Experience

"Budgets are not neutral instruments. They reflect the interests and concerns of people: men and women, boys and girls. Engendering the budget is the best means of meeting the aspirations and needs of men and women, boys and girls." This is one of the conclusions of the seminar entitled *Parliament and the budgetary process, including from a gender perspective*, which took place in Colombo, from 26 to 28 May 2003.

The regional seminar for Parliaments of South West Asia was jointly organised by the Parliament of Sri Lanka and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with the support of the World Bank Institute and the United Nations Development Programme. Chaired by the Hon. Joseph Michael Perera, Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, the three-day meeting brought together members of parliament and parliamentary staff from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The seminar benefited from the inputs of a number of resource persons from Sri Lanka, Uganda, New Zealand, Germany and the World Bank Institute.

In his final report, Mr. Anura Priyadarshana Yapa, MP, Chair of the Public Accounts Committee of the Sri Lankan Parliament, noted that there is a need to strengthen the capacity of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff to analyse the budget and understand general economic issues, including from a gender perspective. "Capacity-building initiatives such as training and professional development activities may be required. Seminars such as this one are very useful in this regard and should therefore be encouraged", he concluded.

The Colombo seminar is part of a series of regional meetings which the IPU has organised for legislators over the past four years. □

Technical Cooperation Update

In the course of the Union's mission to promote representative democracy, the Technical Cooperation Programme devotes considerable time and effort to helping to foster effective democracy at the national level through practical programmes and activities, including technical assistance and institution building for national parliaments. In cooperation with its member parliaments, UN agencies, the EU and other partners, the Union places particular emphasis on providing support for improving the capabilities, infrastructure and technical facilities of national parliaments with a view to enabling them to fulfill their constitutional role more effectively. The following is a rundown of the Union's work in these areas over the past several months.

Constitution-making in Afghanistan

The IPU fielded an exploratory mission in October with a view to supporting the process of drafting a new Constitution for Afghanistan and preparing for the establishment of a new parliament. Following the mission, the IPU is providing advisory and documentary support to the UN team responsible for back-stopping the constitutional Loya Jirga scheduled for December 2003.

Making new information and communication technologies work for Parliament in Albania

The IPU is implementing, in co-operation with UNDP, a project aimed at improving the expertise and skills of MPs and parliamentary staff, promoting the use of new information and communication technologies to forge stronger

links between the Parliament and the electorate, and developing the library, documentation and archives facilities. Recently, the IPU fielded an expert mission to help streamline the documentation and information functions of the parliament. In November it organised a seminar to strengthen the oversight role of the parliament.

Modernising Parliament in Equatorial Guinea

The IPU is working with the European Commission and the Chamber of People's Representatives (CRP) in support of the latter's efforts to modernise its working methods. Recently, the IPU fielded an expert to Malabo to advise the Parliament on the reform of its rules of procedure. It is also setting up a training programme for parliamentary staff to enable them to record the proceedings of Parliament in order to build its institutional memory.

Follow up p.10



Constitutional Loya Jirga site in Kabul: cradle of Afghanistan's new Constitution.

Photo: IPU/Chungong

Supporting the international relations function of the new Parliament of Timor Leste

The IPU, in co-operation with UNDP, is now working on a project to support the Parliament. This project is designed to provide assistance to the women's parliamentary caucus, develop the international relations and protocol activities of the Parliament, and consolidate its role in the budget process. Experts are being made available to the Parliament to provide advisory services in these areas. During November and December 2003 an expert in international relations and protocol spent four weeks in Dili training parliamentary staff and members of the State Protocol office, and assisting with the drafting of the ceremonial, protocol and precedence rules.

Making technology work for the Assembly of Kosovo

The IPU and UNDP are currently assisting the Assembly of Kosovo in establishing an electronic archives system

and a document management system that will open the proceedings of the Assembly to the public, thereby making the Assembly more transparent and accountable to the people.

Needs assessment missions in Sri Lanka and Pakistan

The IPU has been keen to support important developments in Sri Lanka and Pakistan. In Sri Lanka the Parliament is called upon to play a key role in the reconciliation process. Pakistan's parliament has been recently restored after a three-year hiatus. During 2003 the IPU fielded needs assessment missions to carry out a comprehensive review of the functioning of these parliaments, identifying their needs in addressing key problems impeding their functioning. The reports of both missions are being discussed with the United Nations Development Programme and the two Parliaments. Multi-year projects will be developed and implemented to respond to the needs identified. □

Constitutional and Parliamentary Developments

ETHIOPIA

On 23 April 2002, the "Legislative procedure, Committees Structure and working" Proclamation was adopted, as a result of which, the number of Committees in the House of People's Representatives was increased from 9 to 12. A Coordinating Committee of the Parliament has been established comprising the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker as well as the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of each parliamentary committee. The role of this body is to coordinate the function and duties of the House and to provide guidance for the smooth functioning of the parliamentary system.

GABON

On 14 February 2003, Parliament amended Law No. 07/96 of 12 March 1996 setting out provisions common to all political elections in Gabon. On practical and financial grounds, the National Election Commission and its legal components were considerably downsized and the number of representatives of political parties in polling booths was reduced from 442 electoral commissioners to 168.

The two houses further ratified two degrees amending legislation regulating the election of senators and of deputies to the National Assembly. In order to avoid concurrent mandates, the new provisions of these texts henceforth stipulate that a senator or a deputy who is appointed to a non-remunerated post or who is elected mayor, deputy mayor, president or vice-president of a departmental council shall automatically be replaced by his or her substitute.

On 29 July 2003, the National Assembly and the Senate, in a joint meeting as the Congress, adopted a constitutional amendment introducing single-round voting for presidential elections and authorising the Head of State to serve more than two terms. Adopted by 183 votes to 5, the change will enable President Omar Bongo, who has been in power since 1967, to stand for election once again, if he so desires, in the 2012 presidential elections. Article 9 of the Constitution henceforth stipulates that: "the President of the Republic shall be elected for a seven-year term by direct universal suffrage

and by secret vote in a single round of voting. He shall be eligible for re-election"; whereas the previous wording specified that the President could serve two terms only. Several other amendments were also adopted: an amendment to Articles 73a, 75b and 77, aimed "at enhancing the independence of the judiciary and ensuring that the major courts function more smoothly" and Article 110 to enable the President to appoint the President and Vice-Presidents of the Economic and Social Council by presidential decree.

GERMANY

The Law to Amend the Act on New Regulations Concerning the Protection of Federal Constitutional Bodies came into force on 26 June 2003. When the Bundestag and the Bundesrat moved to Berlin in 1999, legislators decide to reframe the rules governing meetings and assemblies in the area around the main buildings of the Bundestag, the Bundesrat and the Federal Constitutional Court. With this aim in mind, the Act on Exclusion Zones around Federal Constitutional Bodies was adopted. Up to that point, the Act on the Exclusion Area around Parliament had generally prohibited meetings within the exclusion area, with exemptions granted at the discretion of the authorities. A particular problem arising in this context was the absence of any criteria governing the exercise of discretion when granting exemptions. The new regulations of 1999 define the extent of the exclusion zones around the constitutional bodies specified and grant applicants the right to held meetings or assemblies in the exclusion zone provided that specific criteria are fulfilled. With the amending law which came into force in June 2003, the time limits on the rules on exclusion zones, which had been defined in 1999 as 30 June 2003, were abolished and a periodic duty to report on experiences with the Act on Exclusion Zones for Federal Constitutional bodies was established for the Federal Government.

GUINEA BISSAU

On 14 September 2003, President Kumba Yala was deposed in a coup by a military junta headed by the Army Chief of

Staff, General Verissimo Correia Seabra. The military chief pledged to form a broad-based government including all the main political parties. President Kumba Yala had dissolved parliament in November 2002 after it had passed a vote of no confidence against him. He then delayed four times the election of a new legislature. The last straw came on 12 September 2003, when the National Electoral Commission announced that it would not be able to complete voter registration in time for the latest proposed election date of 12 October 2003.

INDIA

In June 2003, the Eighty-seventh Amendment to the Constitution was enacted which provided for readjustment of territorial constituencies, including those reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, based on the population census for the year 2001, without affecting the number of seats allocated to States in the legislative bodies.

In January 2003, the Representation of the People Act, 1951 was amended to provide that a person convicted of an offence punishable with reference to section 8 of the Act would be disqualified from contesting an election for a period of six years from the date of conviction where the punishment is only fine and for the period of imprisonment and a further period of six years from the date of his release where the punishment is imprisonment.

The Elections Laws (Amendment) Act, 2003 amended the Representation of the People Act, 1951 in March 2001, with a view to making available the option of voting by proxy to the members of the Armed Forces of the Union and members of the forces to which the provisions of the Army Act, 195 extend.

IRELAND

On 14 July 2003, the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003 was adopted by the Parliament. This Act establishes a body to be known as *Coimisiún Thithe an Oireachtais* or, in the English language, the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, and provides for the funding, functions and composition of this body. It further provides for the position to be known as Secretary General of the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas, as well as for connected matters. This Act enters into force on 1 January 2004

LATVIA

On 15 May 2003, the Parliament in final reading approved amendments to the Constitution and to the Law "On referendum and initiation of laws", thereby securing the legal basis for a referendum on Latvia's admission to the European Union. The amendments provide that Latvia's membership of the EU shall be adjudicated in a referendum initiated by Parliament and that the decision shall be deemed adopted if the number of voters is at least one half of the number who took part in the latest parliamentary elections and if the majority of these voters effectively voted in favour of EU membership of.

NEW ZEALAND

On 7 August 2003, the Electoral (Vacancies) Amendment Act came into force. It provides that the seats of members elected to the current Parliament are not vacated by operation of section 55 (1)(b) and (C) of the Electoral Act 1993. These provisions provide that a member's seat is vacated if the member swears allegiance to, or obtains citizenship of, any foreign power. At the same time, the new Act provides that the seat of a member becomes vacant if he or she ceases to be a New Zealand citizen. This Act is retrospective to 14 August 2002 (the date of the return of the writ of members

elected to the current Parliament) but expires with the close of polling day for the next general election of MPs. The legislation is intended to be a temporary measure pending a full review of the mentioned sections of the Electoral Act 1993 by the Justice and Electoral Committee of the House.

SOUTH AFRICA

On 19 March 2003, the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Amendment Act, 2003* was promulgated. The main purpose of this Act is to enable a member of the National Assembly or a provincial legislature to become a member of another party whilst retaining membership of the National Assembly or that provincial legislature; to enable an existing party to merge with another party, or to subdivide into more than one party, or to subdivide and to permit any of the subdivisions to merge with another party, whilst allowing a member of a legislature affected by such changes to retain membership of that legislature; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

On 11 April 2003, the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Second Amendment Act, 2003* came into force. Several amendments to the Constitution were made in the Act. The effect of those amendments is as follows: (1) To avoid the splitting of a bill dealing with financial matters into two bills, namely, one bill which deals with matters that affect provinces and another one which does not deal with matters that affect provinces, where some of the provisions of such a bill affect the financial interests of provinces and others not. The effect of the proposed amendment is that all bills which deal with financial matters that contain even a single provision affecting the financial interests of the provincial sphere of government, will in future have to be dealt with in accordance with the procedure similar to the one being followed on a bill which deals with provincial matters. (2) To give effect to the request by the Northern Province to change the name of that province to Limpopo. (3) To empower a provincial executive to dissolve a municipal council where a municipality fails to fulfil an executive obligation in terms of the Constitution or where a municipality is in serious material breach to provide basic services or to meet its financial obligations.

SWAZILAND

On 31 May 2003, after a delay of seven years, King Mswati III presented the draft of a new Constitution for the country which he finally approved on 14 November 2003. While this new Constitution ensures that governing power remains firmly in the hands of the monarchy, it is an attempt to balance the concerns of the royal establishment (sub-Saharan Africa's last absolute monarchy) and local and international demands for political reform and the acknowledgement and respect of human rights. However, what it fails to address is the status of political opposition parties, banned since 12 April 1973 when King Mswati's father, King Sobhuza II, suspended the constitution. In fact, while a new provision in the Bill of Rights guarantees "freedom of assembly and association", there is no specific mention of political parties. The Swaziland Coalition of Concerned Civil Organisations, which comprises banned political parties, business and legal organisations, labour unions and human rights groups, while welcoming socially enlightened aspects of the document, such as empowerment of women, announced mass action in reaction against a document which they believe does not fundamentally change the current absolutist status quo.

...READ IN THE PRESS...

London meeting canceled over ban on Zimbabwe

A meeting of international leaders for next year in London was canceled because Britain refused to lift a ban and allow leading members of the government of Zimbabwe to enter the country. The Inter-Parliamentary Union said Monday that a majority of its member countries voted against holding the meeting in Britain without the banned Zimbabwean leaders. African nations had threatened to boycott the meeting if it were held in London. "It is disappointing the meeting won't go ahead in London, but this is the principle that our organization stands for », Anders Johnsson, the Union's Secretary General said from the organization's Headquarters in Geneva.

International Herald Tribune – 15 October 2003

Summit cancelled after Britain bans Mugabe Henchmen

A summit of international leaders in London next year, due to be opened by the Queen and addressed by Nelson Mandela, has been cancelled after the Government barred members of Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwean regime. A dispute in the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), set up in the 1890s to promote world co-operation and peace, has led to the withdrawal of next year's annual conference from Britain in March, after several years of planning...The British delegation to the IPU, led by the Labour MP John Austin, argued it would be unethical to break the EU travel ban, and any meeting would be seen as sanctioning human rights abuses by the Mugabe regime. « I think the entire British group of the IPU will be extremely disappointed by this decision to withdraw the conference, but there are certain principles you have to stick by", Mr. Austin said. "The UK Government is absolutely right to adhere to this ban".

The Independent – 13 October 2003

Rwanda moves to top women MP list

Following elections [in October 2003], 48,8% of Rwanda's MPs are women, says the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Sweden, where 45% of MPs are women, has been the longstanding leader of the IPU ranking of women in parliament. The first polls since the 1994 genocide were marred by reports of intimidation and the IPU said it hoped that the women MPs would help society. Of the 80 seats in the national assembly, 24 were reserved for women and another 24 were elected. A further six women were elected to the Senate. "Women bring something special to legislative work. They have a different view of society than men do", said IPU Secretary General Anders Johnsson. He told the AFP news agency that they were particularly strong on social issues.

BBC News – 22 October 2003

Inauguration of The House of Parliaments

After a week of intense discussions on the problems of the IPU (140 member parliaments), the major questions of the day, and the Organisation's involvement in the application of the "Road Map", the IPU accomplished a long-standing dream, in the words of Secretary General Anders B. Johnsson. The inauguration of "The House of Parliaments" will mark an important stage in the life of the IPU, for it is a tool for action that will provide a landmark for parliamentarians, helping, through ongoing, dispassionate dialogue, to make the debates less contentious", added Jean Charles Gardetta, President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliament of Monaco.

Le Soleil du Sénégal – 6 October 2003

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