

The World of Parliaments

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Article by United States Senator Richard Lugar on weapons of mass destruction

"We must make certain that all sources of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the world are identified and systematically guarded or destroyed. We have taken important steps in this regard, and scored some important victories. Much more needs to be done" stresses United States Senator Richard Lugar, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in an article in *The World of Parliaments*.

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Are human rights a victim of the fight against terrorism?

The Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, Mr. Abdelwahad Radi, takes a look at this problem and the relationship between the West and the Arab and Muslim world.

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Actress Jessica Lange, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, asks reps to join her in protecting children

"In the countries represented at this Assembly there are altogether some 40 million children under the age of 15 who are victims of abuse and neglect, and who need health care and welfare services".



Photo: Herrera/Mexican Senate

"It is for the Iraqi people freely to determine their future" said Speakers of Parliament in Amman



Photo: O. Fahmawi/Jordanian Parliament

From left to right : Mr. A.B. Johnsson (IPU Secretary General), Mr. A. Majali (Jordan), Mr. B. Arinc (Turkey), Mr. K.B.A. Al-Dahrani (Bahrain), Mr. A.F. Sorour (Egypt), Mr. S.B.A. Bin Hemaïd (Saudi Arabia), Mr. S. Páez (IPU President), Mr. J.M.A. Al-Khurafi (Kuwait), Mr. M. Karoubi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr. M. Al-Abrash (Syrian Arab Republic) and Mr. N.E. Bouchkouj (Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union).

"It is for the Iraqi people - and the Iraqi people only - freely to determine their future" declared the Speakers of parliaments of the countries neighbouring Iraq at a meeting held by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Amman on 12 and 13 May 2004.

The meeting, chaired by the IPU President, Chilean Senator Sergio Páez Verdugo, was hosted by the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Jordan, Mr. Abdulhadi Majali. Also present were the Chairman of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain, Mr. Khalifa Bin Ahmed Al Dahrani; the Speaker of the People's Assembly of Egypt, Mr. Ahmed Fathy Sorour; the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mr. Mehdi Karoubi; the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kuwait, Mr. Jasem Mohammad Abdulmohsen Al-Khurafi; the President of the Shura Council of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Salih Bin Abdulla Bin Hemaïd; the Speaker of the People's Council of the Syrian Arab Republic, Mr. Mahmoud Al-Abrash; and the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Mr. Bulent Arinc. The meeting also included the participation of Mr. Ross Mountain, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative for Iraq, ad interim; Mr. Anders Johnsson, the Secretary General of the IPU; and Mr. Nour Eddine Bouchkouj, Secretary General of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union.

A year after the IPU Conference in Santiago de Chile which coincided with the outbreak of the war in Iraq, the Speakers of parliaments present in Amman said that they were convinced "of the urgent need to address the very precarious and complicated security situation throughout Iraq". They joined with many others in calling for respect for the rule of law, human rights and humanitarian law, and for an early, peaceful resolution of the crisis. "We are incensed at the cruel, inhuman and degrad-

(Follow up in p. 2 with quotes of the Speakers of parliaments)

In Amman, Speakers present are convinced “of the urgent need to address the very precarious and complicated security situation throughout Iraq”

(Follow up from p. 1)

ing treatment that has been meted out by members of the occupation forces to some of the Iraqis who have been detained by them. We condemn this flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and basic principles of humanity, and call for those responsible to be brought to justice.” The Speakers also expressed their sympathy with the people of Iraq, who are enduring immense suffering as a result of the continuing conflict that has resulted from the occupation.

The Speakers stated that they “reaffirm that Iraq’s wealth should not be used, nor its natural resources depleted, to implement the reconstruction process. We reaffirm that the people of Iraq must retain sole ownership over all their natural and cultural resources.”

According to IPU President Sergio Pérez Verdugo, “the subject which we have gathered to discuss in Amman is a serious one and demands urgent action. It involves the fate of a people that has fallen prey to violence and fear. But in this adversity there is also an opportunity for Iraqi society to grow with freedom and justice.”

The Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ross Mountain, declared that “one of the fundamental issues here is support for Iraq in its environment and in its region, as Iraq has not always had the best relations with its neighbours. The Secretary-General has emphasised the importance of the countries of the region working together to support Iraq, so that it can restore stability and re-establish its sovereignty, and as we look forward, be a very active democratic player in the region. We regard this meeting as extremely important”.

In the view of Mr. Nour Eddine Bouchkouj, the Secretary General of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, “this meeting is important for a number of reasons. All the Speakers of the parliaments in countries neighbouring Iraq responded to the IPU’s invitation, and the decisions were taken unanimously. These countries feel they must do something to help Iraq out of the current crisis. There is unanimous support among the region’s parliamentarians for the efforts of the United Nations to bring Iraq back onto the international and regional scene and to ensure that it can take its rightful place among nations.”

The Speakers said:

“The IPU can offer a great deal to help draw up a constitution, build democracy and establish institutions in Iraq”

We spoke at length about the situation in Iraq. We have different views. This was the first time that we, as Speakers of parliaments from countries neighbouring Iraq, decided to sit down and talk to see what we could do, what plans we could possibly devise to propose to the leaders of the region and the leaders of the world. From the discussions we have had here, I sense that there is some hope for agreeing on what we can propose. The IPU is very important, because the IPU is

an international, democratic world organisation, and the entire world wants to see Iraq go back to being a democratic country which is strong both politically and economically. We are all interested in seeing Iraq return to the IPU as a member. The IPU can offer a great deal to help draw up a constitution, build democracy and establish institutions in Iraq. So there is a possibility that the IPU will play a very important role in the future in helping to ensure a good standard in Iraq.

***Mr. Abdulhadi Majali,
Speaker of the House of Representatives of Jordan***

“We have an enormous responsibility to support Iraq”

As neighbours of Iraq and as our country shares with Iraq a common geography, we believe that we must help to overcome as quickly as possible the problems that the Iraqi people are now confronting. We have an enormous responsibility to support Iraq as it deals with these problems. It is important for the Speakers of parliaments to discuss these problems.

***Mr. Bulent Arinc,
Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey***

“I hope that those who should listen, will listen to what we are saying, because ours are the countries that are most involved”

The importance of this meeting is that we as people from the countries involved want to show our eagerness to find solutions for Iraq. We are very happy when we see the President and the Secretary General of the IPU involved along with the Speakers and that all of parliaments of the countries neighbouring Iraq. It carries a lot of weight, and I hope that those who should listen, will listen to what we are saying, because it is our countries that are most involved. This event sends a strong message. It is the first time that I have seen all the Speakers come and participate, in response to such an invitation.

***Mr. Jasem Mohammad Abdulmohsen Al-Khurafi,
Speaker of the National Assembly of Kuwait***

“The results should be seen in the near future”

The IPU is the world centrepiece of people power. All the Speakers of parliaments of the countries neighbouring Iraq are looking forward to seeing the results of this meeting. The most important thing is that the Iraqis should know that the people of the world care about the Iraqi people. That is why this meeting is very important. The Iraqi people have faced extreme hardship, for example shortages of medicines. When they hear that this kind of gathering takes place, they will have some sense of optimism. The results should be seen in the near future.

***Mr. Mehdi Karoubi,
Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly
of the Republic of Iran***



From left to right: Mr A. Majali (Jordan), M. K. Bin Ahmed Al-Dahrani (Bahrain), Mr J.M.A. Al-Khurafi (Kuwait), Mr A. Gross (PACE), Mr S.B.A. Bin Hemaïd (Saudi Arabia), Mr B. Arinc (Turkey), Mr R. Mountain (United Nations), Mr S. Páez (IPU President), Mr M. Karoubi (Islamic Republic of Iran), Mr A.F. Sorour (Egypt), Mr N.E. Bouchkouj (Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union).

“We are making every effort to help in the reconstruction and find a solution to the Iraqi problem”

It is very important to find a solution for Iraq. Many people understand that the Iraqi people must be happy and secure, and must be able to live in normal conditions. This meeting is just a beginning. It is the first time that we have had a meeting like this at the parliamentary level. We are making every effort to help in the reconstruction and to find a solution to the Iraqi problem.

***Mr. Mahmoud Al-Abrash,
Speaker of the People’s Assembly of the Syrian Arab Republic***

“This is an appropriate way to provide support, and to keep providing it ”

At this moment, we must support the United Nations in this issue, and especially the United Nations Secretary-General. The recommendations that will come out of this meeting are very important for the United Nations, and especially for the Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Brahimi. The Iraqi people have suffered a great deal. We think there is an urgent need to improve the situation so that they can live in peace and lead a normal life, like any people. The support of parliaments is very important. As the representatives of some of these parliaments, we think this is an appropriate way to provide support, and to keep providing it.

***Mr. Khalifa Bin Ahmed Al-Dahrani,
Chairman of the Council of Representatives of Bahrain***

“The IPU was the first to adopt a decision on Iraq after the war broke out”

This meeting is very important. The IPU was the first to adopt a decision on Iraq after the war broke out -- the

decision taken in Santiago de Chile in April 2003, even before the United Nations Security Council took action. The IPU, as the world organisation of parliaments, has now taken the initiative of preparing for the situation in Iraq and confirming democracy and legitimacy in that country. It was only natural that it should be under the aegis of this organisation that we, the Speakers of parliaments of the countries neighbouring Iraq, should meet to highlight and point to the steps that must be taken to ensure the sovereignty of the Iraqi people. Thanks to the IPU, we, as the representatives of our peoples and defenders of democracy, are here to confirm these principles. We thank the IPU for the opportunity that it has given us to be together here today.

***Mr. Ahmed Fathy Sorour,
Speaker of the People’s Assembly of Egypt***

“We know the important role played by parliaments in the world, and also the importance of this world organisation of parliaments”

We know the important role played by parliaments in the world, and also the importance of this world organisation of parliaments. We are very happy to participate in this meeting. The fact that all the invited Speakers have come sends a strong signal. This event follows a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the countries neighbouring Iraq; it therefore demonstrates the strong interest of the peoples of the region. We feel strongly that it was important to take part.

***Mr. Salih Bin Abdulla Bin Hemaïd,
President of the Shoura Council of Saudi Arabia***

Parliamentarians working on human rights meet in Geneva

The IPU has always considered that parliaments are or should be a guardian of human rights. It has therefore consistently invited member parliaments to set up specialised bodies to deal with human rights as a means of better integrating human rights into their work. As IPU surveys have shown, the number of such bodies has grown considerably over the years, from about 40 in 1990 to more than 160 in 2004. Parliamentary human rights bodies differ very much with regard to their powers, mandate, functioning and working methods.

The idea therefore was suggested to bring together members of such bodies to enable them to discuss their work and to identify best practices for enhancing the promotion and protection of human rights at the national level. Together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the IPU thus organised for the first time a seminar for chairs and members of parliamentary human rights bodies, which also included the participation of members of international, regional and national human rights mechanisms. The event took place from 15 to 17 March 2004 at the

Palais Wilson, the headquarters of the OHCHR, and brought together more than 140 chairs and members of parliamentary human rights bodies from all over the world.

Participants underscored that the way in which human rights are integrated into daily parliamentary work has a strong influence on the extent to which parliaments live up to their role as guardians of human rights. The discussions provided an insight into the wide variety of human rights structures in parliaments and highlighted concrete ways in which parliamentarians work hand in hand with the human rights movement at large.

In her concluding observations, the Chair, Ms. Loretta Ann P. Rosales, Chairperson, Committee on Civil, Political and Human Rights of the House of Representatives of the Philippines, stated that *“Human rights are not a slogan, nor even an ideology, they are juridical, ethical and moral principles which apply to everyday life”*.

She summed up the challenges to which many of the participants had referred: *“The problem today lies in the field of the implementation of human rights norms in the absence of economic, material and*

(Follow up in p. 5)



Parliamentary human rights bodies in action: the case of Brazil

In Brazil, the parliamentary human rights committee launched a campaign for the valorisation of human rights in the media, particularly TV. In a country where 97% of the population watches TV, certain programmes can annul human rights efforts and efforts to implement a peace culture. Together with UNESCO the committee worked on a programme to fight against such programmes, and complaints can now be lodged by telephone (Internet) and raised with competent authorities, the media and their financing institutions (such as multinational corporations) and lead to sanctions. At the same time, the NGOs work with the TV stations to convince them not to send or modify certain programmes. There are also campaigns to incite people not to “consume” such programmes.



South Africa: parliamentarians participate actively in the work of UN human rights treaty bodies

In South Africa, all national reports to international monitoring bodies have to go to parliament for debate, and parliament ensures that those reports contain a wide variety of views, including those of civil society. To do so, parliament holds debates and public hearings, calls in ministers and requests documents and reports from a wide range of departments and citizens. Moreover, members of parliament are included in the national delegation to the international monitoring mechanisms so that they can better understand the recommendations that are subsequently made, and the parliament plays an active role in ensuring that these recommendations are also followed up and implemented at the national level.

human resources. The HIV/Aids pandemic, migration and refugee problems, trade regulations and the behaviour of some States all pose serious problems to human rights. Moreover, while terrorism has no excuse, it is important to ensure that the fight against it did not result in new human rights violations.”

Where to go from here? Ms. Rosales concluded that participants had expressed a clear wish to turn the Seminar into a regular event, which would focus on specific human rights issues and concerns. There was also strong support for the adoption of programmes for parliament in the area of human rights at the national, sub-regional and regional levels so as to increase MPs’ knowledge of human rights issues and mechanisms and to develop parliamentary institutional capacity.



Photo N. Mahdi

Ms Loretta Ann P. Rosales, Chairperson of the Committee on Civil, Political and Human Rights of the House of Representatives of the Philippines



Respecting and ensuring respect for international humanitarian law by everyone, everywhere

There has been an alarming increase in the violation of human rights in practically every corner of the globe. We must take action to defend human rights. In the words of the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, Mr. Abdelwahad Radi, “in today’s world, there has been a loss of moral values and references for many people, and sometimes for whole societies. We are convinced that terrorism is related to the loss of values such as justice, equality and solidarity, which are no longer respected not only within certain countries, but also internationally. This is extremely unsettling for many people. And it means that some individuals can be recruited by just about anybody”. (See the interview on page 8).

In 1999 the IPU and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) jointly published a Handbook for parliamentarians entitled *Respect for International Humanitarian Law*, which has been translated into several languages. Five years later, the Geneva Conventions are often openly ignored. Morally speaking, the suffering inflicted on people in the context of a conflict cannot be tolerated.

As US Senator John McCain wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, the Geneva Conventions “prohibit torture and humiliation of detainees, whether or not they are deemed POWs. These are standards that are never obsolete – they cut to the heart of how moral people must treat other human beings”.

Legislators have the power to make that understood to those who forget that it is in the interest of all to respect and insure respect for international humanitarian law, so that citizens, hostages and prisoners of war in all the regions of the world, can be protected against arbitrariness. The Speaker of the Moroccan House of Representatives states that “democracy is an indivisible whole which must be respected at both the national and international levels.” To restore confidence among those who have fallen into despair, parliamentarians can join their voices with those of their citizens to reaffirm, as Mr. Radi says, that “human rights are not negotiable, and cannot be bartered off. They are to be upheld, and that is all”.

L.B.

Opinion

This article has been submitted to *The World of Parliaments* by Senator Richard Lugar, Chairman of the United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

The greatest threat to global security is the potential nexus of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and a terrorist cell obtaining them

By Richard G. Lugar

Chairman, United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

We must make certain that all sources of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the world are identified and systematically guarded or destroyed. We have taken important steps in this regard, and scored some important victories. Much more needs to be done.

To combat the WMD threat in the former Soviet Union, in 1991 the United States began implementing the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Programme. Nunn-Lugar has devoted American technical expertise and money for joint efforts to safeguard and destroy materials and weapons of mass destruction. During the first ten years of Nunn-Lugar, 6,212 former Soviet nuclear warheads were

separated from missiles. Many of the warheads have been dismantled, with their fissile material safely stored. In addition, the programme has destroyed 520 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs); 451 ICBM silos; 122 strategic bombers; 624 nuclear air-launched cruise missiles; 445 submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs); 408 SLBM launchers; 27 strategic missile submarines; and 194 nuclear test tunnels. Perhaps most importantly, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan are now nuclear weapons-free countries as a result of cooperative efforts undertaken under the Nunn-Lugar programme.

Nunn-Lugar has also worked to contain chemical and biological weapons in Russia. At least forty thousand metric tons of chemical weapons have been stored in seven locations awaiting destruction. This will take place at a facility in a town called Shchuchye, in Siberia.

Under the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, G-8 leaders have pledged \$20 billion over the next ten years for non-proliferation projects, an initiative known as “ten plus ten over ten.” Of this amount, a significant portion has been identified for chemical weapons destruction at Shchuchye.

(Follow up in p. 7)



Photo: Senator Lugar's office

Earlier this year, I hosted a meeting in Washington on the work to be done at Shchuchye. I convened representatives from the Russian Federation, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Norway, Canada, Italy, Switzerland and the Czech Republic to discuss our cooperative efforts to rid the world of the largest stockpile of chemical weapons.

I first visited Shchuchye during one of my regular Nunn-Lugar inspection tours, in 2001. I was shown a weapons depot where close to 2 million artillery shells of nerve gas were stored on wooden shelves like bottles of wine. A Russian soldier photographed me placing one of the shells in a briefcase to display how easily these weapons could be smuggled.

The international chemical weapons destruction and clean-up project at Shchuchye is a monumental undertaking. More than 100 buildings will be constructed at the site. Since the town originally lacked most modern facilities, the project includes water and electricity stations and housing for the more than 150 United States, Russian and other experts, who will destroy 32,500 metric tons of artillery shells and bombs filled with sarin, soman, and VX.

In addition to these governmental funds, the Nuclear Threat Initiative, headed by former Senator Sam Nunn, is making a \$1 million investment in activities at Shchuchye. Green Cross International, the non-governmental organisation headed by former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, is also involved; it has a civil society project designed to build local support for the clean-up and destruction operations.

The experience of the Nunn-Lugar programme in the Russian Federation has demonstrated that the threat of weapons of mass destruction can lead to extraordinary outcomes based on mutual interest. No one would have predicted in the 1980s that American contractors and Pentagon officials would be on the ground in the Russian Federation destroying thousands of strategic systems. If we are to protect ourselves during this incredibly dangerous period, we must create new non-proliferation partnerships and aggressively pursue any non-proliferation opportunities that appear.

In addition to the Russian and United States contributions to the Shchuchye disarmament project, other countries are also helping:

Canada

In May 2003, Canada announced its commitment of up to \$240 million for the destruction of Russian chemical weapons, including those at Shchuchye. Most recently, Canada announced its commitment of 33 million Canadian dollars for an 18-kilometer railway which will transport chemical munitions in a safe and secure manner from the storage bunkers at Shchuchye to the dismantlement facility;

The Czech Republic

has committed \$69,000 for infrastructure at Shchuchye;

The European Union

has committed \$2.3 million for infrastructure at Shchuchye;

Italy

From 2001 to 2003, Italy provided \$7.15 million for infrastructure at Shchuchye. In 2003, Italy committed an additional \$5.75 million to the project;

Norway

committed \$2.3 million for infrastructure at Shchuchye;

Switzerland

committed 17 million Swiss francs to the Russian chemical weapons destruction programme over six years, beginning in late 2003. The Swiss Government has indicated that it will contribute a portion of these resources to the work at Shchuchye;

The United Kingdom

Since 2001, the United Kingdom has committed \$18 million for activities in Shchuchye, over three years. In May 2003, the United Kingdom announced its intention to provide up to \$100 million over ten years for the work at Shchuchye.

Are human rights a victim of the fight against terrorism?

Are human rights a victim of the fight against terrorism? This question, which is of great concern to many humanitarian organisations and citizens' representatives, was the subject of a panel discussion in Mexico City. Organised by the IPU and chaired by Mexican Senator Fernando Margáin, President of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Mexican Senate, the panel included the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, Mr. Abdelwahad Radi, the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Danilo Türk, the Deputy Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, Mr. Joseph Saunders, and the Amnesty International Coordinator for the International Criminal Court in Latin America, Mr. Hugo Relva.

In the opinion of the Panel's chair, Senator Fernando Margáin, "a clear position must be found which makes it possible to combat terrorism without violating human rights. Security must be a priority, but not to the detriment of human rights. In turn, upholding human rights must make it possible to live in freedom while taking security into consideration. For now, the line between them is not clear, which is why we must all work together."

The Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, Mr. Abdelwahad Radi, says:

"We must define terrorism and understand its causes in order to combat it more effectively"

Q.: How can terrorism be fought while maintaining respect for human rights?

Abdelwahad Radi: First, we must define terrorism and understand its causes in order to combat it more effectively. The physical manifestations of terrorism, such as death and destruction, are there for all to see. But we must also understand the deeper causes of the phenomenon. The panel discussion held by the IPU made it possible to agree that the human aberrations that we see may have moral or philosophical causes, or may be underpinned by material motivations. Terrorism as a phenomenon derives from both. Societies and the international community cannot function unless they rest upon values that are accepted by all. Societies must have some points of reference, too. There is good and evil, and there is fair and unfair, and everyone tries to adjust his or her behaviour accordingly. In today's world, there has been a loss of moral values and references for many people, and sometimes for whole societies. We



From left to right: Mr. J. Saunders (Human Rights Watch), Mr. A. Radi (Morocco), Mr. F. Margáin (Mexican Senate), Mr. D. Türk (United Nations), and Mr. H.A. Relva (Amnesty International).

are convinced that terrorism is related to the loss of values such as justice, equality and solidarity, which are no longer respected not only within certain countries, but also internationally. This is extremely unsettling for many people. And it means that some individuals can be recruited by just about anybody.

Q.: What do you mean by material motivations?

A.R.: I am referring to people who lose their jobs, their homes or other property, and those who become stateless and lose their identity. When an individual or a group loses such points of reference; it triggers a whole series of negative and destructive forces is set off. Combating terrorism does not merely mean making use of violence, repression and regulations; it also means upholding certain values and defending moral reference points and landmarks, and restoring hope when people are in despair. It means making them confident in the international system, and in their own systems as well.

Q.: How can that be done?

A.R.: By creating a more just world order, and by attacking problems at their roots. When the United Nations adopts a decision, it must enforce it. There cannot be a double standard. We must not invoke lofty principles one day, and the next day say that "might makes right". That is what causes confusion. Democracy is an indivisible whole, which must be respected at both the national and international levels. If you oppose single party systems within nations, you should oppose unilateralism internationally. Single party systems degenerate into dictatorships, and unilateralism ultimately degenerates into hegemony. People who oppose that react in a disorganised way, which breeds terrorism. Commitments must be fulfilled. It is a question of self-respect, and also of respect for others.

(Follow up in p. 9)

Q.: Many people are concerned about the role played by the United States as a superpower, especially in Iraq. Do you think people in the United States are aware of this?

A.R.: I think that there are people of great valour in the United States who are perfectly aware of it, who are responsible and who respect standards and values, just as we do. Some are in power, others are not. And there are some who think that in a transitional period, you can take some liberties. But there must be no exceptions or concessions. Human rights are not negotiable, and cannot be bartered off. They are to be upheld, and that is all. Whatever the price, world peace and justice must be defended.

Q.: Morocco is a crossroads between the Western and Arab-Muslim civilisations. Is there a mutual misconception between the two, or can they come to an understanding?

A.R.: The misconception between the West and the Muslim world dates back to the birth of Islam. Unfortunately, ever since the Middle Ages, the way in which Islam and Muslim civilisation have been portrayed in the West has done nothing to help. Because Christians saw Islam as a heresy, it followed that there was no reason to make an effort to understand the religion of the devil; instead, it was thought that it should simply be fought. Today the situation has improved; there are now tools that help us establish both a cultural and a religious dialogue. The world is more democratic, people are more educated, and they want to understand. Paradoxically, at the same time there are clashes in a very specific situation: the Middle East, with all of its complex problems, not just political or territorial ones, but also some that relate to religion. I am optimistic. This crisis cannot last forever. It is encouraging that democracy is spreading. But at the very moment that democracy is spreading, we have seen an abandonment of values, a deprecation of politics and a credibility failure on the part of certain politicians. We have to keep our cool and correct this; we must foster democracy, but without slipping into demagoguery. We must steadfastly defend our values and remain true to them. I do not believe in the clash of civilisations.

TECHNICAL COOPERATION UPDATE

Kosovo: Enhancing the transparency of the Assembly

Under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/IPU project of assistance to the Assembly of Kosovo, a memorandum of understanding was signed in April 2004 with the Assembly and the National and University Library of Kosovo for the establishment of the Parliamentary Governance Information Centre. This Centre will provide the population with access to the public areas of the new electronic document management system of the Assembly, and thus enhance parliamentary transparency and accountability.

Equatorial Guinea

On 25 April 2004, the people of Equatorial Guinea elected 100 members of parliament to the *Camara de los Representantes del Pueblo* (CRP). Following this election, the IPU is now set to pursue its European Union-funded programme of assistance. Activities to be organised in the near future include an orientation seminar for the newly elected members focussing on their role and the working methods of parliament. The major subject areas will be constitutional law, parliamentary law, international law, democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Sharing the experiences of other parliaments with Albanian parliamentarians

In March 2004, the UNDP/IPU project of assistance to the National Assembly of Albania organised two study visits for members of the Albanian parliament to the parliaments of Belgium and Hungary. The visits familiarized the members with the overall functioning of these parliaments and how they are structured, with particular emphasis on the oversight role of parliaments, including instruments such as investigations and inquiries.

Strengthening the capacity of parliaments in post-conflict management

Over the past several years, the IPU has worked to support parliaments operating in post-conflict situations. Recently, in the context of its cooperation with UNDP, both organisations have begun thinking about ways and means of ensuring more efficient delivery of technical assistance to such parliaments. On 24 March, the IPU hosted a meeting organised jointly with UNDP on *Enhancing the role of parliaments in conflict/post-conflict settings*. Participants addressed the role of parliaments in conflict situations, and how they could be best structured and assisted in performing this role. This meeting was followed up by the IPU's participation in a conference convened in Bergen, Norway in May 2004 by the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre and the Chr. Michelsen Institute. It focussed on strengthening democratic governance in post-conflict situations, and explored challenges and issues to be addressed in programming democratic governance initiatives in post-conflict situations. The findings of the March 2004 meeting were presented on that occasion.

Parliaments and environmental management

In February 2004, the IPU and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) signed a memorandum of understanding. Under this agreement, the two organisations will carry out joint initiatives to strengthen the capacities of parliaments worldwide, especially in the area of environmental management. Both institutions consider that capacity-building holds the key to ensuring broader and more substantive participation by legislators. A needs assessment has been launched via a questionnaire, which has been sent to several parliaments. The responses will be analysed with a view to designing programmes that are commensurate with the parliaments' priorities and interests. These programmes are expected to be initiated in the second half of 2004.

FRANCE AND GERMANY

an example of reconciliation

At the 110th Assembly of the IPU, more than 600 parliamentarians from 122 countries adopted a resolution on *Promoting international reconciliation, helping to bring stability to regions of conflict, and assisting with post-conflict reconstruction*.

The Assembly called on “parliaments to support the intergovernmental structures, mechanisms and processes that promote stabilisation, reconciliation and peaceful development at regional and subregional level, and to enhance their parliamentary dimension”, and requested that “the IPU establish committees to foster dialogue among MPs in cases where peace and reconciliation processes fail to work”.

As a concrete example of reconciliation, and for the first time in the history of the IPU Assembly, two delegations took the floor jointly: those of France and Germany. The Mexico City Assembly was held nearly two months before the commemoration of D-Day, on 6 June 2004, where French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder confirmed the commitment of their countries to work together, and never again to wage war against one another.

The head of the German delegation, Mr Norbert Lammert, acknowledged that it was indeed exceptional in the general debate of the IPU Assembly for two delegations to take the floor jointly, but said that the German and French delegations wanted to take part in the discussion on reconciliation and partnership with a single address. He explained that there were two reasons for this: first, the past; and second, the future.

He went on to state that “for decades and centuries, the history of the two countries and the European continent had not been one of freedom, cooperation and friendship. The Europe of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, with young and brazen national States defending their respective national interests not with each other, but against one another, was a dramatic example of the impasse where national rivalries and nationalism could lead. The ‘traditional hostility’ between France and Germany over generations resulted in the loss of countless lives, homes and property, and at the same time prevented European unification.”

Senator Robert del Picchia, the head of the French delegation, explained that “the very first condition for the reconciliation was the defeat of 1945 and the acceptance of all of its consequences. It was of course a defeat for Hitler’s Germany, which was conquered, but it was also a defeat for France, whose economy was left in a shambles, even if thanks to Charles de Gaulle and Winston Churchill, France was among the countries that won the war.”



Photo U. Ramirez

From left to right: Mr. R. Del Picchia (France) and Mr. N. Lammert (Germany).

He went on to say that “this defeat, which left both countries in ruins, allowed them to accept one another for what they were, and to repudiate their imperial visions in favour of a more fair view of their situation. After two world wars, the people and their elected representatives were acutely aware of the disaster that they had just been through. We think that such a condition for reconciliation exists in many of today’s conflicts as well.”

Expansion of the European Union: challenges facing the parliaments of the new member States

This is the follow-up to the comments we received from the parliaments of the new member States of the European Union (see also *The World of Parliaments*, N°13).

Latvia’s new status will involve new requirements and means of functioning for the Latvian Parliament

For Mrs. Sandra Paura, Head of the Saeima Inter-Parliamentary Relations Bureau, “the enlargement of the European Union (EU) will bring with it new requirements and means of functioning for the Latvian parliament. Latvia will have to fulfill the commitments agreed during the accession negotiations and that are set out in the accession treaty. We must be ready to formulate and actively defend our national positions, and the Saeima has its role to play.”

In European affairs, Mrs. Paura says that coordination between the Government and the parliament as well the coordination of the legislative agenda within the Saeima is crucial. “In 1998, the role of the Saeima’s participation in European affairs was set out in the parliamentary rules of procedure. In

(Follow up in p. 11)

Chapter VII (Participation of the Saeima in EU Affairs), article 185 states that the Saeima shall participate in EU affairs through the European Affairs Committee (EAC), unless the Saeima has ruled otherwise.”

The provisions establish that “the EAC shall be composed of at least one member from each faction in the Saeima. The EAC shall examine the official positions of the Republic of Latvia, prepared in accordance with the procedure established by the Cabinet of Ministers, and shall rule on them before they are communicated to the European Union institutions.” According to Mrs Paura, the legislative oversight process began “with the examination of our accession negotiation positions, and later resulted in a mandate allowing the Government to act through the meeting of the Council of Ministers. In practical terms, this means that each position of the Government was and is debated in the EAC, and the EAC provides a mandate.”

“That is what we call parliamentary control over the Government in this process. There is a need to involve the

sectoral committees in the debate over EU issues, too (including the government positions prior to Council meetings). On the international stage, it is important for Latvia to strengthen cooperation between the national parliaments within the EU, developing effective mechanisms for such cooperation. Cooperation with the European Parliament (EP) is important for Latvia, too. The office of the Saeima in the EP was established as early as 2001, starting with one permanent representative, and now there are two representatives of the Saeima in the EP. We assume that the need for closer cooperation will be even greater after enlargement. For Latvia, it will be crucial in terms of defending our national interests to have as much effective cooperation and information exchange as possible between the Saeima, the Government, the permanent representation to the EU and Latvian parliamentarians. We believe that the EP will be the best place to defend our interests, states Mrs Paura.”

(To be continued in *The World of Parliaments* N°15)

The world's women members of parliament call for the full participation of women in countries in conflict and in post-conflict situations

The 160 women members of parliament from the 122 countries attending the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians in Mexico City debated the theme of reconciliation. They called for the full participation of women in countries in conflict and in post-conflict situations, as well as for greater representation of women in government and in all decision-making spheres, including parliament, using quotas or other measures.

After being elected President of the Meeting, Mexican Senator Dulce María Sauri recalled that “it was in this very city almost 29 years ago that the First World Conference on Women was held; at the international level, that event was an enormous step towards achieving equality between men and women and putting an end to gender discrimination.”

“We must have more women in politics for our opinions to carry weight”

The President of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians said that the message that the parliamentarians wanted to make heard was that women’s participation must be mainstreamed not only on subjects considered of interest to them, but also for the ones that were central to the 110th IPU Assembly. Attention was also drawn to the two Handbooks for Parliamentarians presented by the IPU on *Parliament, the Budget and Gender* and on the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*. “We also



Photo: Hienara/Mexican Senate

From left to right: Mrs L. Madero (Mexico), Mrs J. Fraser (Canada), Mrs D.M. Sauri (Mexico) and Mrs S. Damen-Masri (Jordan)

decided that at the 110th Assembly, which is to take place in Geneva in September, parliamentarians will discuss Beijing + 10, as this will allow the IPU to bring proposals and the vision of men and women parliamentarians to the session of the United Nations Committee on the Status of Women, to be held in March 2005.”

As a woman with influence in Mexico, Dulce María Sauri believes that if women’s voices are to be heard they must be more involved in politics. “Everything boils down to a question of percentages. If only a few women take part in political life, obviously our voices are not going to be heard. We must have more women in politics for our opinions to carry weight. That has been the case in other countries, such as Rwanda, South Korea and Belgium.”

In Mexico City, the Assembly also elected a new Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians. Senator Joan Fraser (Canada) was elected President, and Senators Salwa Damen-Masri and Lidia Madero were elected as Vice-Presidents. The President and Vice-Presidents emphasised that the Coordinating Committee was working for true gender partnership.

***“The IPU has been a beacon
in the field of women
parliamentarians’ rights”***

I think that one important thing women parliamentarians have to do now is to ensure that women continue to play a major role - even an enhanced role - as the IPU adapts to the new procedures and structures that have been established by the reform of the Union. The IPU has been a beacon in the field of women parliamentarians’ rights, and we have established a wonderful base upon which to build. Now we have to ensure that we use the base well as the Union builds new traditions and sets new precedents. It will be good for both the IPU in general and for women parliamentarians in particular. Throughout the IPU, in all of the committees and geopolitical groups, we need to spread the understanding that what we are talking about and working for is partnership, true gender partnership. Many of our male colleagues in the Union are already our strong allies in this. They know that when women’s strengths and talents are fully integrated into all our institutions, it is not only the women who benefit. It is the institutions themselves, and the whole of society - including the men!

• **Senator Joan Fraser (Canada)**

***“The aspirations of my country and
my nation must be given the chance
to be heard and appreciated through
the contribution of Arab voices”***

My interest in the various fields of world affairs means that my vice-presidency is a good opportunity to stretch the horizon of interest and knowledge to the widest extent possible. On the other hand, the aspirations of my country and my nation must be given the chance to be heard and appreciated through the contribution of Arab voices. And the exchange of ideas between representatives of Arab culture and the rest of the world can certainly produce positive effects that are beneficial to all. My aspiration is that one day we will see a world of fairness, and devoid of all forms of aggression and oppression. I feel that I am not only an Arab woman, but also a citizen of the Arab nation.

I would like to convey to the world all of the dimensions of the Arab cause and all of the afflictions that we as Arabs must face. I would like to do something to enable the Arab world to communicate its message and contribute to building a better world with respect for human values, a world that presents opportunities not only for the present, but also for generations to come. Consequently, my message for male colleagues is the same as the one for female colleagues. I would humbly call upon all human beings to listen carefully to the innate voice of their consciences, and to act accordingly. Hopefully, then, mankind will become a closer family, and a happier one, now and forever.

• **Senator Salwa Damen-Masri (Jordan)**

***«The crimes committed against
women in Ciudad Juárez reflect our
position of weakness»***

As Mexican legislators, we are obliged to present our country as one which seeks democracy, as a State which fights for women to be present in parliament and for them to have their place in the community and in the family, where our viewpoints are often the last to be taken into account. At the community level, women must understand that if they remain silent, the community cannot reap the benefit of their opinions, which are different from those of men. Political participation by women is a matter of national security. If women do not speak out, the views of half the population will always be forgotten. In Mexico, women’s political participation is still very low. We must assume the responsibility of being more present in political life, and men must take on the responsibility for encouraging women to take part in all decision-making. The crimes committed against women in Ciudad Juárez reflect our position of weakness. Now that these crimes have been divulged and recognised, the authorities must carry out investigations and assume their responsibilities. But we must not forget a hidden type of violence which affects women every day: domestic violence. Thousands of women are abused and killed in their own families. We must work together, men and women, to stop it.

• **Senator Lidia Madero (Mexico)**

UNICEF goodwill ambassador Jessica Lange asks parliamentarians to join her in protecting the world's children

At the 110th IPU Assembly in Mexico City, the IPU and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) jointly unveiled a Handbook for Parliamentarians on *Child Protection*. The Handbook was officially presented by the IPU President, Sergio Páez Verdugo and Jessica Lange, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, who launched a special appeal to the world's parliamentarians. Interview:

Q: What is your assessment of the situation of children in the world?

Jessica Lange : In the countries represented at this Assembly there are altogether some 40 million children below the age of 15 who are victims of abuse and neglect, and who need health care and welfare services. Some 246 million children work, and 300 000 are suffering from the worst forms of exploitation in armed conflicts in over 30 countries. It is estimated that more than 2 million children died as a result of armed conflict in the 1990s alone.

Q: What do you expect from parliamentarians? How can they help?

J.L. : I think we have to work from the very highest level all the way down to ensure a protective

environment for children. Of course, for parliamentarians, this means enacting laws that protect children, that ensure their safety, health and well-being and their right to education. Parliaments should provide the resources necessary in support of social programmes that enable this to happen, so that children are able to attend school and families are able to support their children, keeping them off the streets and out of the work force. The possibility of exploitation must be eliminated. Where children are exploited, parliaments must make sure that laws are enforced and that the maximum penalties are consistently applied.

Q: So you are asking them to be your ally?

J.L.: To put it in a word, yes.



Photo Herrera/Mexican Senate

From left to right: Mr J. Judd (UNICEF), Mr E. Jackson (Speaker, Mexican Senate), Mrs J. Lange (UNICEF), Mr A.B. Johnsson (IPU Secretary General), Mr S. Páez (IPU President).

A panel on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children took place on the occasion of the 110th IPU Assembly. Debates stressed the urgency to combat this scourge that affects more than two million children every year and highlighted the key role parliamentarians can play in creating the necessary political and legislative environment to combat CSEC, and to facilitate the recovery and reintegration of child victims. Panellists included US actress Jessica Lange and UNICEF representatives, members of parliament from Namibia, Philippines and the United Kingdom, and of a non governmental organization.



Photo Herrera/Mexican Senate

Parliamentary developments

ALGERIA

On 7 February 2004, an organic law was adopted which amends and supplements the Order of 6 March 1997 establishing an organic law on the electoral system. The new provisions *inter alia* call for elections to take place under the responsibility of the administration, whose staff is expected to be strictly neutral. Vote counting must be public, and must take place in the assigned polling station, except for mobile polling stations, which “exceptionally” may count their votes at their assigned polling centres.

ARGENTINA

In June 2003, an Order was adopted amending article 99, paragraph 4 of the Constitution. With this amendment, when a candidate to a post on the Supreme Court is proposed by the President, his or her personal record must be published so that the public can present relevant objections. The Senate has amended its Standing Orders accordingly.

AUSTRALIA

On 8 September 2003, Senate Standing Order 74 was amended. The amendment related to the protection by parliamentary privilege of the process of asking and answering questions on notice. A resolution of the Senate on 30 October 2003 declared that the Senate and its committees would not entertain claims of commercial confidentiality unless they were made by a Minister and were accompanied by a ministerial statement of the basis of the claim, including a statement of the commercial harm which might result from the disclosure of the information. In June 2002 the Senate had adopted, as a temporary measure and for a trial period, a procedure whereby bills would not be considered in the Committee of the Whole unless a Senator circulated amendments to a bill or required that it be considered in committee. This procedure was incorporated into the Standing Orders on 3 December 2003.

BELGIUM

On 5 February 2004, a bill introducing various changes relating to election procedures was adopted at the parliament’s plenary meeting. The bill covers elections to the Councils for the Flemish, Walloon and Brussels-Capital regions and for the German-speaking community. In particular, the changes restored alternate candidates, and lowered from 21 to 18 the age of eligibility for election to the Councils and for designation as members of the governments of the Flemish, Walloon and Brussels-Capital regions and of the German-speaking community. The changes also introduce an electoral threshold of five per cent for the distribution of seats among electoral lists taking part in an election.

CAMBODIA

On 10 January 2004, King Sihanouk accepted a request from Mr. Chea Sim, the President of the Senate, that the

mandate of the Senate be extended for a year “to avoid a constitutional crisis”. The Senate was established in March 1999 for an initial term of 5 years.

CANADA

At the beginning of the third session of the 37th Parliament in February 2004, the House of Commons approved a motion allowing the reinstatement of government bills during the first 30 days of the session, provided that the bills in question are in the same form as in the previous session and that the Speaker is satisfied that they are in the same form as agreed by the House of Commons at prorogation. In such cases, the bill shall during the current session be deemed to have been considered and approved at all stages completed at the time of prorogation of the previous session.

On 17 February 2004, the House of Commons agreed to amend its Standing Orders to change the names of two standing committees: the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights became the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, and the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities became the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

CHAD

On 26 May 2004 the National Assembly, by 123 votes for, none against and one abstention, adopted a constitutional amendment bill relating to eight articles of the Constitution. The revised articles stipulate that there will be no limitation on the number of terms a President may serve, thus eliminating a two-mandate limit that had previously existed. The Senate is replaced by an Economic, Social and Cultural Council, and the Head of State may, after a decision taken by the Council of Ministers, take the initiative to revise the Constitution. This amendment, which had to be approved by two-thirds of the 155 deputies, must now be passed in a referendum if it is to be definitively adopted.

Deputies from the opposition groups in parliament, including the *Fédération d’action pour la République*, the *Rassemblement pour la démocratie et le progrès* (RDP) and the *Union nationale pour la démocratie et le développement* (UNDR), have brought an appeal before the Constitutional Court calling for this constitutional amendment bill to be overturned.

INDIA

During the Thirteenth and Fourteenth sessions of the Lok Sabha (21 July 2003 to 5 February 2004), several amendments to the Constitution were adopted. The Constitution (Eighty-Seventh Amendment) Act provides for readjustment of territorial constituencies, including those reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, based on the 2001 Census, without affecting the number of

seats allocated to the states in the legislative bodies. The Constitution (Eighty-Eighth Amendment) Act provides for levy of service tax by the Union and its collection and appropriation by the Union and the states. The Constitution (Eighty-ninth Amendment) Act and the Constitution (Ninetieth Amendment) Act deal with the provisions of bifurcating the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and maintaining the existing representation of the Scheduled Castes and non-Scheduled Tribes, respectively, from Bodoland Territorial Council Area District in the Legislative Assembly of Assam. The Constitution (Ninety-first Amendment) Act provides that the total number of Ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the Council of Ministers shall not exceed fifteen per cent of the total number of members of both houses of parliament. Similarly, the total number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, in the Council of Ministers in each state shall not exceed fifteen per cent of the total number of members of the legislative assembly of that state, provided that the number of Ministers, including the Chief Minister, shall not be less than twelve. It also provides that any member of either house of parliament or the legislative assembly or council of a state who is disqualified under the Anti-Defection Law enumerated in the Tenth Schedule shall also be disqualified from being appointed as a Minister.

The Representation of People (Amendment) Act was passed by parliament in July 2003 to do away with the requirement for candidates to reside in a particular state or union territory in order to contest an election to the Council of States from that state or territory. It also introduced an open ballot system for the election to the Council of States.

INDONESIA

On 10 August 2003, the Annual Meeting of the People's Consultative Assembly adopted the Fourth Amendment to the Indonesian Constitution. The amendment abolished the Supreme Advisory Body, an institution that had previously had the function of advising the President, and allocated 20 per cent of the national and regional state budgets for education.

On 11 March 2003, the House of Representatives approved the Law on the General Election. According to this new law, general elections are to be conducted in three stages. In the first stage, elections are held for the members of the House of Representatives (national level), for the regional representative councils and for the provincial or district houses of representatives; in the second stage, elections are held for the President and Vice-President, and in the third stage, a final round of elections is held for the President and Vice-President if, during the previous round, no candidate obtains 50 per cent of the votes, with a minimum of 20 per cent of the votes in half the Indonesian provinces. Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates are to be paired on a single ticket put forward by one or more political parties which have obtained at least 15 per cent of the seats in the national House of Representatives and 20 per cent of the popular vote.

MALI

With the municipal elections of 30 May 2004 approaching, on 30 January 2004 a law was adopted modifying the Electoral Act. Provisions were repealed which had allowed recently transferred public servants to be registered on voting lists just before an election, as were those relating to mobile and roaming polling stations. The modifications also established the composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which includes 15 members, ten of whom are designated by the political parties. The Commission had formerly consisted of five representatives from majority parties and five from opposition parties. To take into consideration the current situation in which the opposition is much weaker, the ten posts set aside for the political parties of the majority and the opposition will in the future be "equitably" distributed. Other modifications call for disputes relating to candidacies to be settled by a civil judge, whose ruling will not be subject to appeal, and for rescheduling certain tasks, such as the distribution of voter registration cards prior to an election, which will now begin 30 days before the voting, instead of 25. The new law includes some important innovations, such as the transfer of competencies. In communal elections, all the competencies and prerogatives assigned to mayors by the Electoral Act are to be transferred to representatives of the State, including the handling of voter registration cards, the dropping off of ballots at polling places and the chairing of the committee which gathers ballots, counts votes and announces the outcome.

PAKISTAN

In December 2003, the Seventeenth Amendment Bill was passed by both houses of parliament and received the assent of President Pervez Musharraf. This Bill brought an end to a deadlock which had practically paralysed the parliament and created a schism in national politics for a year, by resolving the debate over the validity of the Legal Framework Order (LFO) enacted by General Pervez Musharraf in 2002. The Bill asserts the validity of the LFO, but also further amends the Constitution, with the effect of modifying certain provisions of the LFO. After obtaining the President's assent, the amended LFO, through this constitutional amendment, became a part of the country's Constitution.

The amendment gives the President the power to dissolve the National Assembly and to refer the matter to the Supreme Court within 15 days of its dissolution. The Court will decide the reference within 30 days, and its decision will be final. Through a similar amendment to Article 112 of the Constitution, in case of dissolution of a provincial assembly, the Governor is required to refer the dissolution to the Supreme Court, after obtaining approval from the President, and the Court will finally decide the matter within 30 days.

Another amendment now requires the President to appoint chiefs of services in consultation with

the Prime Minister, whereas before the amendment, the President could do so at his discretion.

The Bill also grants immunity to President Musharraf for all acts committed since the military action on 12 October 1999, and accepts him as the elected President by allowing a vote of confidence from both houses of parliament and the provincial assemblies. The Constitutional amendment established that President Pervez Musharraf needed only to obtain a simple majority to win the vote of confidence, with only the votes of the members who were present and voting to be counted. The votes of absent or abstaining members would not be counted in the tally.

On 1 January 2004, President Musharraf won a vote of confidence in both houses of parliament and in four provincial assemblies. This will keep him in power until late 2007.

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

On 25 July 2003, the Moldovan parliament adopted a law amending the Constitution. Article 73 was amended, granting the People's Assembly of the autonomous territorial unit of Gagauzia the right to initiate legislation. Until then, only the members of the national parliament, the President of the Republic and the Government had the right to initiate legislation.

On 29 May 2003, the parliament adopted a law to amend its Rules of Procedure with the purpose of harmonising them with the legislation in force. It thus replaced the word "inquiry" with "criminal prosecution".

On 31 July 2003, the parliament adopted a law that introduced a new chapter in the Law on State Social Insurance Pensions. The amendment gives pension rights (42 per cent of the median monthly income) to those persons who were members of parliament or staff of the parliament during the twelfth legislature and those who served in the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova.

READ IN THE PRESS

Parliamentary Speakers call for end of occupation in Iraq

Parliamentary Speakers from countries neighbouring Iraq meeting in the capital called for an end to the occupation in Iraq and a wider role for the UN in restoring security and sovereignty to the war-torn country. Several of the delegates' speeches at the opening ceremony of a two-day conference [in Amman], held under the auspices of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), touched on the abuse of human rights and Iraqi prisoners by US forces.

"We believe that human rights should be upheld in Iraq", IPU President Sergio Páez Verdugo said at the opening ceremony, adding that "the international parliamentary community will help bring the suffering of the Iraqi people to an end and restore their freedom and dignity".

• **The Jordan Times - 13 May 2004**

Iraq's parliamentary neighbours meet in Jordan

Parliamentary Speakers from six countries neighbouring Iraq and feeling the effects of conflict there opened two days of talks to discuss the situation ahead of the June transfer of power to Iraqis by the US-led coalition. All the participants called for a rapid end to the US-led occupation in Iraq, restoring of its sovereignty and independence, and the preservation of its territorial integrity. The meeting, organised the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and hosted by Jordan brought together parliamentary Speakers from Syria, Turkey, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Jordan who share borders with Iraq. Representatives from Egypt, Bahrain, the United Nations and the Arab Parliamentary Union were also present.

• **Agence France Presse - 12 May 2004**

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