

# The World of Parliaments

Quarterly Review of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

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## IN THIS ISSUE

### • Page 4

#### **IPU Observes Out-of-Country Elections for Iraq's Transitional National Assembly**

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) fielded election observers across the world for the poll held over three days at the end of January to allow expatriate Iraqi citizens to cast their votes for the new Transitional National Assembly. IPU observers were present at polling stations in Canada, Germany, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jordan, the Netherlands, the Syrian Arab Republic, Sweden and the United States of America.



Voting in Teheran.

### • Page 5

#### **Panel of eminent persons on Democracy**

The IPU convened a high-level panel at its Geneva Headquarters to launch its democracy framework project. This project will produce guidelines in the form of a manual of good parliamentary practice. The manual will show how parliaments contribute to democracy and will identify the key features of a democratic parliament, with examples of good practice drawn from around the world.

### • Page 8

#### **Establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean**

The fourth and last inter-parliamentary Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) was held in Nafplion, the seat of the first parliament of modern Greece, in February 2005. This event, held under the auspices of the IPU and the Hellenic parliament, gave birth to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

## **Interview with Mrs. Gloria Arroyo Macapagal, President of the Philippines**

**Looking forward to the 112th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary which will take place in Manila, the President of the Philippines, Mrs. Gloria Arroyo Macapagal, shared with *The World of Parliaments* some views on migration, terrorism, population issues, domestic and international policies relating to women, and natural disasters.**



President Gloria Arroyo Macapagal.

**Q: Madam President, the IPU is preparing for a debate on the subject of migration. The Philippines is respected for its successful policies in this area. Do you have any suggestions to give to other countries confronted with migration problems?**

**Gloria Arroyo Macapagal:** The welfare and protection of overseas Filipinos, estimated at eight million worldwide, are among the foremost priorities of the Philippine Government. The well-being of our overseas workers constitutes one of the eight pillars of my foreign policy. Most Filipinos emigrate as fixed-term contract workers who remit a large part of their earnings to their families here, and return to the Philippines when their contracts end. Our Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) are called our "new heroes" for their valuable role in strengthening the country's economy. In 2004 alone, OFW remittances through banks reached US\$ 8.54 billion. The Philippines was instrumental in proposing the adoption by the United Nations of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which will protect migrant workers of all nationalities. I hope the the IPU membership will urge their respective governments to fully enforce this Convention, which took effect in 2003.

(Follow up on page 2)

## **Follow up interview with Mrs. Gloria Arroyo, President of the Philippines**

***“Our efforts to improve the economy and eradicate poverty will eliminate the recruiting grounds of terror in our society”***

**Q: What are the origins of terrorism in the Philippines and how is your Government coping with the problem?**

**G.A.M.:** The root of terrorism is evil. We believe it is an act of tyranny by dangerous misfits who subvert the true meaning of Islam. We abhor the use of terror to kill innocent civilians, including children, for a senseless cause. Soon after 11 September 2001, the Philippines adopted a programme to combat regional and local terrorism that highlights international networking, intelligence cooperation among international and domestic counter-terrorism forces, the interoperability of our various law enforcement agencies and community involvement in intelligence gathering. Aided by advanced technology and strategies from friendly governments and the solidarity of the Filipino people, we were able to neutralise four of the five most wanted local terrorist leaders, and contain terrorist threats in our land. Our soldiers, with the help of vigilant communities, continue to track down these terrorists in their lairs. Our efforts to improve the economy and eradicate poverty shall mop up the recruiting grounds of terror in our society.

**Q: The Philippines has the highest birth rate in Asia. The population could double within three decades. Is there any chance of reducing poverty in these circumstances?**

**G.A.M.:** Our population policy derives its mandate from the constitutional guarantee to defend “the right of spouses to found a family in accordance with their religious convictions and the demands of responsible parenthood”. We stand by responsible parenthood, enlightened birth spacing and choice. We aim to reduce our population growth rate to 1.9 per cent, from the current 2.3 per cent, within six years through an aggressive family planning information campaign that provides couples with more informed choices on family size, and equally emphasises mother and child health. We are actively pushing for

natural family planning methods, as they are the most “religion-neutral” and affordable techniques, and they are among the easiest practices to adopt.

**Q: One of the agenda items of the 112<sup>th</sup> IPU Assembly deals with the impact of domestic and international policies on the situation of women. How do you think countries can improve the situation of women who are exposed to exploitation in the workplace or who become victims of criminal networks?**

**G.A.M.:** I am happy to say that towards the end of the 1990s, the Philippines had already met all but two of the commitments drawn up in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, including those relating to violence against women. Since 1993, the Philippine Congress has passed at least 15 laws for the protection of women and children. I am particularly proud of our Anti-Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Act of 1995, which I authored when I was a Senator, and the five laws relating to women and children that have been adopted under my presidency. I followed up on these five bills during my term as Vice-President, when I was also the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. They include laws prohibiting trafficking in persons, especially women and children, and laws defining violence against women and children. I urge other countries to pass their own laws prohibiting violence against and the trafficking of women, and to promote the economic empowerment of their women. Most cases of exploitation of women are rooted in economic inequality. I strongly call for greater cooperation among nations with regard to the implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, as well as the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

(Follow up on page 3)

**Q: The Asian region is suffering from the consequences of the earthquakes and tsunami. What can you recommend as a long term strategy for the region in this regard?**

**G.A.M.:** The Philippines's immediate response was to send medical and forensic teams in response to the needs of the most affected countries. A team of doctors, nurses and sanitation engineers was dispatched to Sri Lanka and another medical team went to Indonesia, while a 20-member forensic team was sent to Thailand in two batches. In the short term, there was a tremendous need for rescue and relief measures, particularly to meet basic needs such as requirements for clean water, food and health care. As we approach the medium term, efforts should concentrate on rehabilitation of the victims, including the provision of livelihood opportunities and therapy for emotional trauma to help them return to normal life. At the Special Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Leaders' Meeting, held in Jakarta in January, I expressed full support for the establishment of a Tsunami Warning System in the region and for information sharing. Additionally, I offered the skills of our people in helping rebuild lives and restore physical property, and the offer still stands. I believe that physically rebuilding a structure can signal the start of the psychological healing process for the affected people. It would be ideal if ASEAN leaders would consider the establishment of a regional rapid response and relief operations centre for such types of disasters, so as to improve the effectiveness of regional rescue and relief operations and, through international cooperation, mitigate the damages brought on by such calamities. Perhaps future ASEAN summits can refine this concept.

## Editorial

### ***A new breath for democracy***

In January the Inter-Parliamentary Union held the first of a series of panel discussions on the parliamentary dimension of democracy. These panels will be aimed at developing guidelines to make it possible to draft a Guide of good parliamentary practice, a handbook intended to show how parliaments can contribute to democracy and to identify the main characteristics of a democratic parliament, with examples of good practices in the different regions of the world.

The time is particularly right for such work. As former Speaker of the Israeli Knesset Avraham Burg notes, there is currently a global "erosion of the role of parliaments in many sectors of the world".

This is of particular concern for young people. According to a dispatch from Guysen Israel News, "young Israelis trust their army, but not their parliament". According to a poll, "77 per cent trusted Tsahal; 66 per cent the judicial system; 42 per cent the media; and 32 per cent the Knesset".

The views of the former Knesset Speaker, who resigned from parliament last year, are also held by Beninese journalist Francis Kpatindé, who writes for the Paris weekly *Jeune Afrique L'intelligent*: "In public opinion, the press and the executive branch, parliamentarians are perceived as nay-sayers and time wasters, sometimes because parliamentary work involves a lot of ruckus and is so slow. Parliamentarians should do a better job of communicating, be more transparent and above all explain how they are overseeing the executive branch and consolidating democracy, which protects the interests of the population. That is not understood. They must also open up to domestic social debates and discussions on foreign policy. Parliamentarians do not take part in the great challenges of our times. They have to become more visible."

British professor David Beetham, the rapporteur for this exercise, went further, stating that "there is the perception that parliaments are increasingly being bypassed in the governing process, and both collectively and individually, their members are held in low public esteem. It is timely, therefore, to seek to establish some clear criteria for democratic parliaments to help increase understanding of their place and importance in the democratic process and improve their public standing within it".

The preliminary results of this exercise will be presented at the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments that the IPU will hold in September in New York.

Has the time come to suggest a new way of looking at politics? Mr. Peter de Souza, an expert on democracy assessment at the University of Goa (India) thinks that it is rather time to formulate "a kind of navigational code" and to "re-establish an engagement with a moral vision".

**L.B.**



## OUT-OF-COUNTRY ELECTIONS FOR THE TRANSITIONAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF IRAQ

As the deadline approached on Sunday, 30 January, at the Ammourieh elementary school in Jabal Al-Nasr, Amman, the last voters were filing in. All wore the same look of subdued expectation. As they left, two of the polling staff who had not yet voted lined up to have their registration cards checked, their index fingers dipped in purple ink and their ballot paper stamped and folded. They then took their places behind the cardboard screen.

At five o'clock it began to rain. The ballot boxes were closed. The observer from one of the Iraqi political parties wrote down the numbers of all the plastic seals on the boxes and went on his way, apparently satisfied. But the day was far from over for the polling station staff. A long process of meticulous tallying and reconciling of figures occupied the next hour and a half. It got steadily colder in the classroom.

Eventually the work was done, the figures were all double, triple and quadruple checked, and the ballot boxes were carried to a waiting van and locked inside. The polling station presiding officer climbed in the front. Flanking the van was a police car. Behind, a Toyota truck waited with three helmeted policemen standing in the back, one of them manning a heavy machine gun mounted on the roof. With sirens blaring and lights flashing, the convoy moved off at high speed towards the counting centre, a fortified warehouse behind the airport. It took all of my driver's skills to keep up. Lurching through the suburbs, it was refreshing to watch the theatricalities of a police convoy deployed to protect ballot papers rather than high-ranking dignitaries.

In 14 countries around the world, from Calgary to Tehran, from Rotterdam to Damascus, the same scenes had been played out over three days, as expatriate Iraqis voted for their Transitional National Assembly. The out-of country polls for the Iraqi Assembly had been set up in a very short time. The Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) decided to entrust the task to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) towards the end of 2004. From its field headquarters in Amman, IOM, an agency with extensive experience in organising such external voting programmes for elections in places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, East Timor and Afghanistan, had just 69 days to set up its operation before the elections began on 28 January.



After voting, Amman.

Despite much tighter deadlines for the IPU, seven Member Parliaments managed to deploy parliamentary observers to monitor the voting at the polling stations in their countries. In the event, there was unanimous acclaim for the nearly faultless organisation of the poll. More than 80 per cent of the staff running the polling stations in the 14 countries were themselves Iraqis, and everybody was struck by their professionalism and dedication. The voters had for the most part never cast a ballot before in their lives. Their questions were answered with patience, and delicate situations - such as in Damascus where the veils worn by many women voters hampered visual identification - were handled with tact. Similar sensitivity was shown in assisting the considerable number of illiterate voters.

The discouraging side to all this was that relatively few people had registered to vote. Figures for expatriate Iraqis run to well over one million, but only a little more than a quarter of that figure actually turned up at the registration centres. Those who did had often travelled hundreds of miles. One IPU observer in the Netherlands told of a couple who flew from Italy to Amsterdam to register and then spent the next few days in a hotel waiting for voting to begin. Doubtless many were effectively disenfranchised by such difficulties. The reason most often referred to in explaining the low registration rate, both in Europe and the Middle East, was that many expatriate Iraqis who felt their legal status was questionable were afraid that their personal details would make their way into the hands of the police of their host countries. IOM did its best to make it clear that all details would be treated in strict confidentiality, but this was not sufficient to allay all their fears.

Widely commented on by the media on the Friday and Saturday, the out-of-country elections and the issues related to them were completely dwarfed by the morning of Sunday, 31 January, when long queues started to form at the polling stations in Iraq.

J.J.

### Senator Páez highlights Iraq's out-of-country elections

The President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Chilean Senator Sergio Páez, confirmed that the Iraqi elections held in 14 countries of the world were conducted with transparency and normalcy. The voting took place at the same time as the elections were being held in the Middle Eastern country itself. The Chilean legislator emphasised that despite the fact that there were just nine days to register and establish electoral rolls, 283,300 persons registered, or about 25 per cent of those eligible, and some 93 per cent of those registered actually voted.

**El Mostrador (Chile) – 2 February 2005**

### "Process of Iraqi polls held in Iran satisfactory"

London(IranMania).-Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Anders Johnsson, told Irna that the process of Iraqi parliamentary election in Iran is quite satisfactory. Johnsson added in his interview with the head of IRNA's Qom Bureau, "the level of participation of Iraqi compatriots at centres set up in Iran for the purpose is the highest compared to any other country which reveals that the Iranian officials in charge have made appropriate arrangements for the purpose". In response to a question on possibility of fraud in January 30th Iraqi parliamentary elections, he said "the supervision system monitoring the authenticity of elections is so strong that such possibilities are ruled out".

**IranMania News - 29 January 2005**

### Parliament President addresses parliamentary forum on Mediterranean security

Parliament President Ana Psarouda-Benaki addressed the Fourth Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean that is taking place in Nafplion, which is discussing the creation of a permanent forum for Mediterranean parliaments. In her address, Psarouda-Benaki stressed the need to accentuate efforts to create a Euro-Mediterranean free trade zone and to resolve security issues that have arisen in recent years. She noted that without a secure environment, it was inconceivable to expect Mediterranean countries to develop and their people to prosper; at the same, security could not be imposed by "raising walls or by the threat of arms procurements", but arose "from the will of the people and the cooperation of governments". She said that terrorism was a serious threat to humanity that was becoming particularly serious in the Mediterranean because of the fluidity of its political and socio-economic fabric. Saying that this "evil nightmare" must be stamped out, she stressed the need to address the roots of the phenomenon and try to deal with it using democratic processes, without jeopardising "our achievements in the area of political institutions and human rights".

**Athens News Agency (ANA) – 7 February 2005**

## IPU LAUNCHES DEMOCRACY FRAMEWORK PROJECT

The panel comprises a mix of high-profile current and former parliamentarians, journalists and democracy scholars, as well as academics. It will provide substantive guidance as the project is implemented. Professor David Beetham, a well-known academic, is serving as the panel's rapporteur.

### "There is an erosion in the role of parliaments"

At the end of the panel discussion, the participants gave their views on current perceptions of parliaments and on how parliamentarians could act in order to enhance their standing at the national and international levels. For Mr. Avraham Burg, former Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, "this panel is may be the most important act of the IPU in the last couple of years. It is a response to the global challenge, as it is not only dealing with individual parliaments here and there, but also looking for a new imagination for the parliamentary world".

But Mr. Burg, who resigned from the Knesset last year, also sounds an alarm. "There is an erosion of the role of parliaments in many sectors of the world. If they know how to give themselves new life, parliaments will have a very interesting future. If not, people will look for alternative systems. This is part of the effort to preserve the representative system; the democratic one."

That view is echoed by Professor David Beetham when he asserts that "there is the perception that parliaments are increasingly being bypassed in the governing process, and both collectively and individually, their members are held in low public esteem. It is timely, therefore, to seek to establish some clear criteria for democratic parliaments as a contribution to increasing understanding

(Follow up on page 6)



From left to right: Mrs. L.A. Rosales, Mrs. Y. Erturk, Mrs. D.M. Sauri, Mr. D. Beetham, Mr. M. Bützer, Mr. A.B. Johnsson, Mr. M. Chungong, Mr. P. de Souza, Mr. F. Kpatindé, Mr. C. Ndebele, Mr. O. Delamare-Deboutteville, Mr. A. Burg, Mrs. C. Murray and Mr. P. Cornillon.

Photo: IPU/BJ

of their place and importance in the democratic process, and improving their public standing within it”.

## **"Parliamentarians do not take part in the great challenges of our times"**

Francis Kpatindé, a Paris-based Beninese journalist, thinks along the same lines. “In public opinion, the press and the executive branch, parliamentarians are perceived as nay-sayers and time wasters, sometimes because parliamentary work involves a lot of ruckus and is so slow. Parliamentarians should do a better job of communicating, be more transparent and above all explain how they are overseeing the executive branch and consolidating democracy, which protects the interests of the population. That is not understood. They must also open up to domestic social debates and discussions on foreign policy. Parliamentarians do not take part in the great challenges of our times. They have to become more visible”.

That may well be the case. But are governments ready to make room for them on the international political scene? Mr. Kpatindé replies, “They have to fight for it. All freedoms must be fought for. They have to attract the public's attention and make their differences clear”.

## **"The new demands of democracy"**

For Mrs. Christina Murray, Professor of Human Rights and Constitutional Law at the University of Cape Town (South Africa), parliaments should be the centre of democracy in any State, “but it is also clear that over the last century, they have moved to something of a backstage spot in the view of the public, and perhaps they haven't kept up with addressing the new demands of democracy. A meeting like this allows us to focus on what parliaments can do in developing democratic practices and in deepening democracy”.

Does this mean that there is a gap today between citizens and their representatives? Mrs. Murray responds that “the gap is not only between parliaments and the people; it is perhaps more broadly between the institutions of government and the people, and it is wider in some countries than in others”. She explains that in her country,

South Africa, “there are statistics which suggest that the public has very little contact with its public representatives, and that is a problem. There is also the fact that the media tend to look to the executive for news rather than to parliaments, partly because the executive implements policies, and that is the major concern”.

## **"Re-establishing an engagement with a moral vision"**

A new way of doing politics, with a new vision? Mr. Peter de Souza, an expert in democracy assessment at the University of Goa (India), thinks so. He expressed the hope that the panel would assist in creating a new tool, a “kind of navigational code for people who, in their parliamentary life, come across a fork in the road. This code could help them to decide which way to go. We have the potential to re-establish an engagement with a moral vision. The parliament is an institution, a body of procedures, but it is also a moral vision of universality, of equality, of peaceful resolution of conflicts, of inclusion and of negotiation; the truth about parliaments is somewhere in the middle, and not in the extremes”.

Mr. Pierre Cornillon, a former IPU Secretary General, agrees: “This handbook will be welcome in all parliaments, not only those with a long tradition, but above all in those parliaments that are now attempting to become institutions making a contribution to democracy in their countries. Each has some experience to share.”

A fascinating challenge indeed, but how can it be met? Professor Beetham says that “depends on how we consolidate relations between the IPU and the parliaments, and how we market it”.

## **Concrete steps**

Congresswoman Loretta Ann Rosales, Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee of the House of Representatives of the Philippines, has decided to take a number of concrete steps. “I already have in mind what I will do about the process; I will make sure that the deliberation results of our initial panel meeting are discussed in the House of Representatives, the committees involved and the NGOs in which I am a very active member (the Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms and the Institute for Public Democracy), as well as in my political party. I will be reporting back to the

(Follow up on page 7)



Speaker of the House on the panel discussion. I have also discussed this meeting with several parliamentarians and with the Ambassador of Philippines at the United Nations in Geneva, who is very interested in its results”.

## **Democracy every day**

Mexican Senator Dulce María Sauri emphasised the “panel’s commitment to strengthening parliaments as a most appropriate setting to ensure that democracy takes hold and becomes a common practice. We hope that the handbook that we are intending to publish will help parliaments to strengthen their activities and become more democratic, and thus stronger. Translating the quasi-philosophical concept of democracy into everyday life is of course an enormous challenge.” Mrs. Sauri and the other experts who took part in the Geneva panel make no claim to give lessons in democracy, but rather hope to “find ways to make known the difficulties and achievements of parliaments in their specific situations and in the light of their specific needs”. She says that she does not believe in universally applicable solutions, “all the more so when we talk about how parliaments work. What is important is to make use of techniques that have produced good results in the past, not only for the parliament itself, but above all for the citizens who expect the State to help them solve their problems”.

## **“We are in a state of ambiguity with regard to existing institutions”**

Mrs. Yakin Erturk is the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women. “I found this panel very interesting. The only problem is that we are not looking sufficiently at the more global aspects. Globalisation has brought in the idea of transgressing national boundaries and challenging governance at the national level, but also, after the September 11th 2001 attacks, it brings up the question of how the world’s hierarchy has become monopolar, and what this entails in terms of initiatives for greater democratisation at the national level.”

As a social scientist, Mrs. Erturk explains that “the world is in the process of developing a new social order. We are still going through this, and I do not quite understand the parameters of this changing order. On the other hand, we are still dealing with

the existing institutions: nation-States, parliaments, and so forth. Those institutions may not be entirely sufficient in discussing the broader issues, because new institutional formations that correspond to the new transnational parameters have not yet emerged. Even an institution such as the United Nations, which was created to meet the needs of multilateral dialogue after the Second World War, is insufficient in responding to the transnational dimension of the world order today. And the United Nations reform, which is not going very well, is required precisely due to the fact that we are not questioning the fundamental role of the United Nations, but we are trying to make provisions within its existing structure. We are in a state of ambiguity with regard to existing institutions, similar to what the world went through during the transition involving the establishment of nation-States”.

The solution? “We must consider new institutional responses, rather than keeping our discussions within the limits of existing institutions”.

## **“The importance of an independent Speaker”**

In democracy, it is essential to have an independent parliament. And for Mr. Cyril Ndebele, a former Speaker of the Parliament of Zimbabwe, “an independent parliament without an independent Speaker is meaningless”. Mr. Ndebele knows perfectly well what he is talking about. “The independence and the integrity of the Speaker is absolutely crucial to the advancement of democracy within the essential institution which is the parliament”. When asked if governments usually allow Speakers of parliament to be independent, his response is a clear reminder to all representatives of the executive branch of the State. “We must know why we have a parliament, and what its role is. It is to provide an oversight view of the executive, and therefore it cannot take instructions from the executive, which it is supposed to oversee”. But when such a scenario occurs, what can a Speaker do? “With all humility, I think that in most cases it is difficult for Speakers to stand up to the executive or against the political authority of a party to which they may belong. But once a person is elected Speaker, that person is in a position above. It gives him or her that independence”.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

As the last President of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), French parliamentarian Rudy Salles considered that the end of the CSCM was also a beginning. The CSCM process “will indeed continue in what we hope is an improved form, as its successor, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean”.

The President of the Hellenic parliament, Mrs. Anna Psarouda-Benaki, emphasised efforts to establish a Euro-Mediterranean free trade zone and to resolve security issues that have emerged in recent years, stating that without a safe environment, it was inconceivable to expect the Mediterranean countries to develop and their peoples to prosper. She noted that security could not be imposed by “raising walls or by the threat of arms procurements, but that it arose from the will of the people and the cooperation of governments”.

In the view of Mr. Abdelwahed Radi, the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, “the future assembly will be, as the CSCM: a place of dialogue to make the Mediterranean a zone of peace and democracy, a place where the rule of law and respect for human rights prevail”, so that the peoples of the Mediterranean, who share a rich cultural and religious heritage and a tradition of trade, will be able to write a new page in their long and common history.

Mr. Radi recalled that “the IPU was the first organisation to open the debate on the role of parliamentarians in working for security and cooperation in the Mediterranean, in 1992, in Malaga, three years before the Barcelona process began”. Two more conferences followed: in La Valette, Malta, in 1995 and in Marseilles, France, in 2002.

The Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr. Claudio Azzolini, expressed his support for the establishment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, hoping for “close cooperation with it”. Among the possible fields for cooperation between the two assemblies, he cited the fight against terrorism, cultural cooperation, migration, human rights and democracy.



From left to right: Mr. Anders B. Johnsson (IPU Secretary General), Mrs. Elsa Papadimitriou (member of the Hellenic parliament and co-Rapporteur of the CSCM), Mr. Rudy Salles (deputy in the French parliament and President of the CSCM), Mrs. Ana Psarouda-Benaki (President of the Hellenic parliament) and Mr. Abdelwahed Radi (Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco and co-Rapporteur of the CSCM).

Photo: Greek parliament

In the Declaration adopted by consensus by the fourth CSCM, the participants stated that “The transformation of the CSCM process into an Assembly will give more stature to parliamentary diplomacy in the Mediterranean region. It will provide the Mediterranean region with a unique parliamentary forum of its own, unattached to any ongoing process, where the members of the Assembly will be able to draw up and examine their own agenda. It will enhance the participation of Mediterranean States, thus enabling them to proceed beyond conceptual analyses to the drawing up of recommendations and opinions on questions of direct concern to them and to the Mediterranean space”.

The inaugural session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean will be held in Jordan in the second half of 2005.

The CSCM process took place with the participation of the Mediterranean coastal States - Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia and Turkey - and three States that do not border on the Mediterranean, but are directly linked to the region economically, politically and strategically: Jordan, Portugal and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.



## **ANWAR IBRAHIM, FORMER MALAYSIAN DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MEETS THE COMMITTEE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENTARIANS**

**T**he IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians held its 108th session in Geneva in January 2005. It elected a new President of the Committee, Mrs. Ann Clwyd, member of the British House of Commons, who replaced Mr. Mahamane Ousmane, the President of the National Assembly of Niger.

Mrs. Veronika Nedvedova (Czech Republic, Vice-President of the Committee), Mr. Luis Hierro (President of the General Assembly and the Senate of Uruguay), and Mr. Manouchehr Mottaki (Member of the Majlis Shoraye Eslami of the Islamic Republic of Iran, substitute member for the Asia Pacific Group), were also present.

At the House of Parliaments, the Committee met with Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, the former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of Malaysia, whose case has been examined by the IPU since 1999.

### **Interview**

**Q: After attending the World Economic Forum in Davos, you came to the IPU. What was your message?**

**Anwar Ibrahim:** I came to express my profound gratitude to the Secretary General and to the Committee. They have been consistent in honouring the aspirations of the IPU. It is a great task to protect the human rights of parliamentarians. During my dreadful experience - six years of solitary confinement in Malaysian prisons -, and even in the worst time, when the situation seemed hopeless, I had a note from the IPU saying that there was a human rights committee meeting, and that it wanted a response from me, through my wife or my counsel. It gives so much hope to know that there is someone in a remote part of the Earth who is deliberating on this, and who remains committed to the ideals of democracy, human rights and human dignity.

**Q: Do you think the work of the Committee has an influence?**

**A.I.:** We know that Malaysia and many other countries fear that the abuses they inflict on innocent citizens are being discussed throughout the world, and this is of course a source of embarrassment, particularly when the authorities claim that they are democratic and that the parliament, the judiciary and



The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians met with Mr. Anwar Ibrahim.

the media are fully independent, when this is clearly not the case. In Malaysia, for example, we still have the draconian Internal Security Act, under which people can be detained without trial indefinitely.

**Q: Do you think that it is important that the IPU Committee consists of members of parliament from various regions?**

**A.I.:** The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians is unique. Of course, there is also the International Commission of Jurists, composed of judicial experts, and there are other NGOs which represent activists, but the uniqueness of the IPU resides in the fact that it operates within the system. It is tied to the principles of democracy, human rights, human dignity and freedom. Members of parliament, unlike government ministers, foreign ministers or the diplomatic community, are not mouthpieces of their governments, and in principle have more freedom to speak out, although in certain countries this may be risky. I must say that within the constraints of having to work with some parliaments which are far from democratic or the result of free and fair elections, the IPU is able to work wonders. As one who has been a victim, I certainly appreciate this more. I have told the Secretary General and the Committee that I will

(Follow up on page 10)

certainly reciprocate and express my gratitude by continuing to support the good work of the IPU.

**Q: Generally speaking, do you think that the situation of human rights all over the world, and also in Iraq, has improved, or is it more difficult today?**

**A.I.:** Any comparison of atrocities or abuses of human rights which were committed in the past can only be relative, but we are certainly in a better situation now. But even then, this can be misleading; when it comes to human rights, we are dealing with each and every individual human being, and so you cannot rely on statistics. The pain inflicted on a person or on his wife and family members is unimaginable. Nevertheless, there is undeniably a trend in the civilised world today towards democracy, human rights, and dignity. Now that I am a free man, I am in a better position to observe. The situation is still pathetic; it is dreadful, and we have much to do to prevent human rights abuses from occurring. The situation in Iraq is of course the extreme example, because of foreign occupation, but you must remember, and I have said this consistently as a Muslim, it is all the more unfortunate because the Muslims there were muted during decades of atrocities inflicted by the so-called Muslim leader Saddam Hussein against his own people. It is therefore not just a western, American design that we should condemn, but any form of atrocity. We should condemn the violence of the perpetrators of violence, but we should also condemn the violence perpetrated by the State. The IPU and all human rights organisations will have to do more, because the hypocrisy of political leaders – I can say this with some confidence as a person having been involved in politics for some time – is certainly untenable. They speak about democracy and free elections, about respecting the dignity of men, but in actual fact they run contrary to all these ideals. This is a very pertinent moral issue of conscience. We have to encourage and motivate more people, the young in particular, to demand that the excesses be stopped.

**Q: Do you intend to withdraw from political life?**

**A.I.** No. On the contrary. This experience has convinced me even more that in politics, with a strong sense of conviction, with moral principles, you can move ahead.

## **LANDMARK UNITED NATIONS REPORTS URGE ACTION TO ENHANCE COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND ACHIEVE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

As part of its drive to implement the 2000 Millennium Declaration, the United Nations recently issued two major reports: the first, by a High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, presents over 100 recommendations for the United Nations system and Member States to face the new security challenges of the century more effectively and under a strengthened multilateral decision-making system; the second, by the UN Millennium Project (a global network of specialists coordinated by the United Nations) submits considerations and proposals with a view to achieving the Millennium Development Goals over the next 10 years.

The two reports will be at the centre of United Nations debates during the course of 2005 and are expected to provide an important conceptual background to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the Sixtieth Session of the United Nations General Assembly, to be held in September with a view to assessing progress in the implementation of the 2000 Millennium Declaration.

The report of the High-level Panel, entitled *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility*, is meant to energise the international community into rethinking the concept of collective security so as to encompass not only terrorism and military threats, but also the equally dangerous threats derived from poverty, transnational crime, environmental degradation and climate change, HIV/AIDS, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

At the same time, the report aims at providing governments around the world with an indication of the most urgent reforms needed to enable the United Nations to face these new challenges in an integrated manner. In particular, the report contends that the way in which the United Nations deals with issues remains too compartmentalised, resulting in an inability to adequately discern and address the multifaceted threats that exist today in the world. The authors note, for example, that it was only in 2000 that the Security Council held its first debate on the security risks posed by HIV/AIDS.

The report makes it clear that in this age of globalisation the challenges facing the international community are so interdependent and of such magnitude that they can only be addressed through global solutions. Multilateralism, governed by international law, is therefore of vital importance. Moreover, if governments want security for their people, they need to think of human security in the broadest possible terms. Development and security, in other words, have now become two sides of the same coin.

(Follow up on page 11)

Some of the most important recommendations from the High-level Panel report (A more secure world: Our shared responsibility) include the following:

- Expand the membership of the Security Council so as to make it more representative of the world in which we live today;
- Adopt a clear set of guidelines for the Security Council to follow when considering the use of military force;
- Establish a Peacebuilding Commission with representation from the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and other major stakeholders, to identify countries at risk, mobilise the appropriate preventive measures and provide necessary support for post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding;
- Consider a proposed new definition of terrorism and start work on a comprehensive new international convention;
- Initiate negotiations on global warming to build consensus on the measures required after 2012, when the provisions of the Kyoto Protocol will no longer apply;
- Make operational some of the current proposals for innovative approaches to financing for development;
- Establish a timetable for donor countries to reach the 0.7 per cent target of GNP in official development assistance (ODA), and conclude the Doha round of trade negotiations by 2006.

Precisely because security and development are so crucially inter-dependent, the UN Millennium Project report, entitled *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*, constitutes an important complement to the High-level Panel's conclusions. The United Nations Millennium Project consisted of a huge research endeavour that called on the world's foremost specialists in all fields of development to help identify the most effective investments that governments could make in order to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) agreed to in 2000. The report avoids dogma and ideology to strike at the core of the development problem. Recognising that too many countries have gone off course in their efforts to achieve the MDGs, the report's main premise is that it is only through massive investments in physical infrastructure, human capital, and institutional development that poor countries can realistically meet the MDGs' 2015 deadline.

One of the principal recommendations put forward in the UN Millennium Project report, and perhaps the most relevant one to the parliamentary community, is that governments design 10-year national strategies that would directly be geared to implement the basic blueprint of the report. Such strategies should be developed in consultation with all partners within a given country, and with the widest possible public consultation. Where Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are already in place, the report recommends revising them to ensure that they are more explicitly designed to achieve the MDGs. Needless to say, parliaments play a key role here in developing the recommended strategic plans and ensuring broad national consultations thereon.

The implications of these two reports for the IPU and its Member Parliaments are many and far-reaching. Many of the recommendations set forward are in line with positions that the IPU has taken over the last few years. The need for a consistent definition of terrorism, for an improvement in the targeting of sanctions and for a predictable increase of ODA, and many other similar action lines, have also been addressed by IPU Member Parliaments. Other recommendations, in contrast, are new, and they deserve careful consideration at the parliamentary level.

Already, at United Nations Headquarters in New York there has been intense scrutiny of these basic documents. Many delegations have highlighted the areas where the reports have brought forward valuable arguments and contributions, as well as those aspects that have not been sufficiently or adequately explored. Among the latter, there are the role that economic development plays in safeguarding collective security; the need for Security Council reform to include not just broader membership, but also better methods of work and decision-making mechanisms; and the risks involved in limiting weapons proliferation at the expense of the promotion of disarmament.

As the world's parliamentary community is preparing for the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments, to be organised by the IPU in cooperation with the United Nations later this year in New York, the two reports could not have come at a better time. They provide essential food for thought on the most critical issues of our time, and material that parliaments can integrate into their own deliberations. They also serve as a basis for consultation and analysis in designing the outcome documents for the 2005 World Conference, at which parliamentary leaders will be called upon to pronounce on the future of multilateralism, the strengthening of the United Nations system, and the further development of the parliamentary dimension to international cooperation, in particular in respect of the work of the United Nations.



## PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON WTO URGES GOVERNMENTS AND PARLIAMENTS TO ENGAGE IN A REGULAR DIALOGUE

Around 300 parliamentarians from 80 countries met in Brussels in November 2004 at the annual session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, which was jointly organised by the European Parliament (EP) and the IPU. They adopted a Declaration in which they “urge governments and parliaments to engage in a regular dialogue so that the latter can effectively exercise parliamentary oversight of the international trade negotiations and their follow-up.”

At the end of the meeting, we interviewed EP President Josep Borrell and Brazilian Ambassador to the WTO Luis Felipe de Seixas Correa.



From left to right: Ambassador Sh. Oshima (Permanent Representative of Japan to the WTO, Chairman of the WTO General Council), Mr. L. J. Brinkhorst (Minister of Economic Affairs of the Netherlands, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union), Mr. J. Borrell (President of the European Parliament), Mr. Sergio Pérez (IPU President) and Mr. A.B. Johnsson (IPU Secretary General)

### EP President Josep Borrell:

***"Governments should act knowing that their parliaments are behind them"***

**Q: Do parliamentarians have a role to play in WTO negotiations?**

**Josep Borrell:** The negotiations are the responsibility of governments. But it is important that governments should act knowing that their parliaments are behind them. And parliaments cannot wait for the work to be over to say whether or not they agree, because by then it is hard to say no; if they do not agree, that challenges the whole process.

So it would be best for them to follow the negotiations closely and give their opinion as they advance, so that their participation helps ensure a better result and a better understanding on the part of the public.

**Q: Are governments prepared to let parliaments play a role?**

**J.B.:** I think they are increasingly doing so. International negotiations used to be the private domain of governments, but globalisation has changed all that. The subjects are too important. Indeed, we no longer deal exclusively with trade questions, but also with issues of interest to society as a whole.

### Brazilian Ambassador to the WTO Luis Felipe de Seixas Correa:

***"Parliaments provide political legitimacy for decisions made by governments"***

**Q: Can parliaments be active in WTO negotiations?**

**Luis Felipe de Seixas Correa:** Of course. Like anything having to do with trade, WTO negotiations are political: they relate to everything from the conditions of production to wealth distribution. Parliaments provide political legitimacy for decisions made by governments. They have a role to play, not in the negotiations themselves, but in observing and discussing with members of the executive branch of their respective countries the decision-making and the guidelines that are given to their negotiators. After all, the issues in question affect or influence our societies. And if I may say so, parliaments are the very best insurers of political power in our countries.

**Q: Are governments prepared to let parliaments play a role?**

**L.F.d.S.C.:** Yes. I can speak for the case of Brazil. We are doing our best to inform parliamentarians and to enable them to participate in general terms in formulating our negotiation strategy. For us, this is part of the legitimacy of our trade policy, and it is a commitment that we think should grow.

**Q: Will this help the WTO to be more transparent to citizens who have their doubts about that organisation?**

**L.F.d.S.C.:** Perhaps. Transparency at the WTO is not just a question of concern to citizens; it is also of concern to certain member States. That is the case in all negotiation processes. Some negotiations have to take place in small committees, as it is very difficult to negotiate a text with the representatives of 148 countries in a single meeting room. But the WTO's decisions are transparent. The texts are there and everything we do is the result of a consensus. The 148 WTO member States which take part in the decision-making have representatives whose legitimacy is ensured by their governments.

## TECHNICAL COOPERATION UPDATE<sup>1</sup>

### Equatorial Guinea

To take the technical assistance and capacity-building activities the IPU has implemented under its project of assistance to the House of People's Representatives of Equatorial Guinea a step further, a series of seminars is planned for members of parliament and staff. These seminars will focus on the functions of a modern parliament and will include human rights and gender-related presentations. A technical assistance mission is also billed to take place during the first quarter of 2005. The mission will assist the parliamentary authorities in reviewing the various rules of the House, including those governing staff, the objective being to ensure that a realistic organisational chart is drafted and implemented.

### Nigeria: bringing parliament closer to the people

Since signing a multimillion euro democracy programme that provides support for the federal parliament and six state legislatures in July 2004, the IPU has devoted its efforts to the establishment of a Project Management Unit (PMU) and to laying the groundwork for the effective initiation of the project. Needs assessment missions have been fielded to the six state assemblies which will benefit from the project. Project documents have now been finalised, and project implementation will start in earnest in March 2005.

The project will build the capacity of the legislatures concerned and ensure that legislative decisions are informed by inputs from society. A host of activities are foreseen, including training, advisory services and the provision of equipment in order to bring these institutions closer to the people through adequate information policies.

This programme is funded by the European Commission and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

### Support for the parliament of Uruguay

A new project has been launched for the parliament of Uruguay. Designed in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), it has been endorsed by the two Chambers of the Uruguayan General Assembly. This project constitutes a second phase in efforts to help the parliament improve its working methods, including through more active involvement of civil society. This second phase will strengthen the constitutional functions of the parliament, especially its oversight function, as well as strengthen its administrative and human resources capacities. Human rights will be a major area of focus.

### Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) increases support for IPU operational activities

In December 2004 the IPU and SIDA signed an agreement in support of IPU operational activities in the area of democracy. The agreement, involving some US\$ 1.5 million of SIDA funding, includes a framework for the activities that the IPU intends to carry out over a period of three years, from 2005 to 2007 with SIDA financial support. These activities are intended to complement the other democracy-related work the IPU is already undertaking. Under the agreement, the IPU will carry out activities to strengthen the capacities of parliaments and to support their efforts to promote gender equity in political life and human rights. Activities will be organised at the national and regional levels.

<sup>1</sup> The Union's Technical Cooperation Programme provides assistance to parliaments worldwide, strengthening their capacity to perform their functions more efficiently.

## IPU PUBLICATIONS

### Women in politics 2005

Presented on 3 March at the UN Headquarters (New York), on the occasion of the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the map is the result of a global survey conducted by the IPU that gathers data on the number of women in both the legislative and executive branches of government as of 1 January 2005. It is an update of a similar map published in 2000.

The map, free of charge, is available in English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Russian and Chinese.



### The House of Parliaments, seen by Jean Mohr

A year after the inauguration of its new Headquarters, the IPU is publishing a commemorative book entitled *The House of Parliaments/La Maison des Parlements*. This volume provides an illustrated look at how a residence built by architect Marc Camoletti was transformed into the House of Parliaments, as seen through the lens of photographer Jean Mohr. Born in 1925 in Geneva, Jean Mohr has travelled all over the world. His photo essays have appeared in the Swiss and international press, and he has numerous books to his credit, including some published in collaboration with the writers John Berger and Edward Said. For two years, his camera focused on the tradesmen that worked on transforming the old Villa Gardiol into The House of Parliaments. Jean Mohr's photos, adeptly laid out by Swiss graphic designer Sandra Binder, pay tribute to their artistry.

This book (bilingual French/English) can be ordered from the IPU Secretariat for SF 30.-



## Parliamentary developments

### BELGIUM

Two bills addressing the public financing of political parties were adopted by the federal parliament; they were passed on 12 February 2004 by the federal House of Representatives and on 20 January 2005 by the Senate (the bills have not yet been published in the *Moniteur Belge*). The first bill changes the coordinated laws of 12 January 1973 on the Council of State and the law of 4 July 1989 on the limitation and monitoring of spending on elections to the federal chambers, as well as addressing the financing and open accounting of political parties. The bill stipulates that it is now possible to eliminate the financing of a political party that has shown “its hostility to the rights and liberties ensured by the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms”. The second bill eases the conditions for the granting of funding to political parties. Parties represented in just one chamber may benefit from public financing, as long as they have a directly elected parliamentarian in the chamber.

### FRANCE

On 26 September 2004, the first Senate elections were held since the adoption of the Act of 30 July 2003, which changed the mandate of Senators from nine years to six (except for those covered by transitional provisions). As of 2010, half the Senate will be elected every three years.

At the same time, the number of Senators will gradually rise from the current level of 331 to 346 in 2010, so as to “better respect the representation of the demographic balance and of territorial units”. The distribution of seats in the Senate will be as follows: 326 Senators elected from the departments in metropolitan France and the overseas departments; three from French Polynesia and Wallis and Futuna, two from New Caledonia, two from Mayotte, one

from Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, and 12 representatives of French citizens overseas. The minimum age for eligibility as a member of the Senate has been lowered from 35 to 30.

### LIBERIA

The Transitional Legislative Assembly finally adopted an electoral reform bill on 14 December 2004 in preparation for the election scheduled in October 2005. The parliament had already passed the bill in November 2004, adding a controversial amendment to conduct a national census before the polls. The head of the interim Government, Gyude Bryant, refused to sign the bill, and sent it back to the National Assembly, as the census would have postponed the election by up to three years.

An electoral system requiring an absolute majority will be used for presidential, senatorial and mayoral elections. For the 64-member House of Representatives, population size will be partially taken into account in the distribution of seats. Thirty seats will be assigned to the 15 counties, while 34 will be allocated among the counties on the basis of the number of registered voters in each.

### MOZAMBIQUE

On 17 November 2004, the Mozambican parliament passed the first constitutional amendments since the introduction of multiparty politics in 1992. The amendments had originally been proposed in 1999, but the parliament did not reach agreement due to a lack of support of the opposition party, the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo). Although the changes were modest compared to the original proposal, the revised Constitution aims at reducing the powers of the Head of State by increasing those of the parliament and the Prime Minister. The Head of State will no longer be immune from prosecution. Moreover, with a two-thirds

*(Follow up on page 15)*



majority vote the parliament will now be able to impeach the president for crimes committed in the exercise of his duties. The amendments also include the establishment of a Council of State, which should serve as an advisory body to the President. Many analysts welcomed the constitutional amendments, but some were skeptical about their positive impact on democracy in this country.

## **RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

On 12 December 2004, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a bill that eliminates direct gubernatorial elections in the country. This law gives the President the exclusive right to name candidates for the posts of the 89 regional leaders in the Russian Federation. The President may name one or two candidates, who are subsequently to be elected by the regional legislatures. If a regional legislature fails to elect one of the President's candidates three times, he may dissolve the legislature in question and appoint his own candidate as acting governor. Some experts have challenged the legality of the new law, which goes against efforts to ensure decentralisation and undermines the country's federal character. For the time being, the Constitutional Court has not ruled on this matter.

## **SLOVAKIA**

A number of constitutional and election acts have been introduced in Slovakia. One of them is Constitutional Act No. 357/2004 Col. regarding holders of public office. This law, adopted in October 2004, prohibits those who exercise public functions from performing other functions or being engaged in other employment or activities. It also provides for sanctions (including the withdrawal of the mandates of deputies) in cases where public officers fail to perform their duties. Another constitutional act, Act No. 140/2004 Col., provides deputies with absolute and unconditional immunity when voting at the sessions of the National Council. Concerning election acts, Act No. 333/2004 Col.

was adopted in October 2004, with the aim of introducing the possibility of voting by postal mail. The law establishes a special list for electors residing outside Slovakia and for those outside the territory at the moment of the election. Another major provision includes the registration of candidates by political parties. Each political party will have to produce confirmation that it has paid an election deposit of SKK 500,000 (about US\$ 17,000). This deposit will be reimbursed if the party obtains more than 3 per cent of the votes cast; otherwise it will be absorbed into the state budget.

## **THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

A referendum held on 7 November 2004 on the repeal of a law protecting minority rights failed owing to a low turnout of 26.5 per cent, well below the required 50 per cent. The law, which came into effect on 12 August 2004, redraws local authority boundaries to increase the representation of ethnic Albanians, who make up about a quarter of the population. It also makes Albanian the second official language in areas where Albanians constitute more than 20 per cent of the population, including the capital, Skopje. The adoption of a law to improve minority rights was one of the last hurdles to be passed in the implementation of the 2001 Ohrid peace agreement. Full implementation of the peace accord remains a condition for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia's membership to the European Union.

However, many Macedonians fear that if ethnic Albanians in neighbouring Kosovo gain independence, those in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia will follow the same path. Opponents of the law collected a total of 180,000 signatures to organise a referendum against it. Both the Government and foreign States urged voters to boycott the poll. Consequently, only 500,000 of the 1.7 million eligible voters cast their ballots. The law to protect minority rights was thus sustained.

## ***"Volunteerism is an enormous resource for development"***

**D**uring the 111th Assembly in Geneva, the IPU and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) launched a Handbook for parliamentarians entitled *Volunteerism and Legislation: a Guidance Note*. The Executive Coordinator of UNV, Mr. Ad de Raad, was present. Interview.

### **Q: What do you expect from parliamentarians?**

**Ad de Raad:** If we look at the contributions that volunteerism can make to social development, there is a role to be played by parliaments, in particular in supporting legislation to create an enabling environment for volunteerism to take place. Very often, that is taken for granted. Looking at the spontaneous reaction to joint IPU-UNV publication, I am very glad to see that parliamentarians realise how important voluntary contributions are; this is perhaps the case because political campaigns also rely heavily on volunteers. None of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals are going to be achieved without the efforts of the millions of ordinary people who are engaged in voluntary actions. That is why we pay so much attention to cooperation with the IPU, to bring in parliaments as partners.

### **Q: How would you describe your movement?**

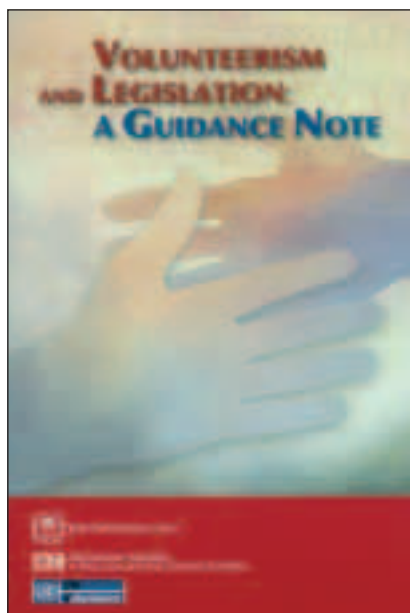
**A.d.R.:** We have close to 6,000 volunteers in the field. They come from 160 countries, work in 140 countries, and 70 per cent of them are from developing countries. It is a unique expression of South-South cooperation, and it is a double faceted action. The average age of our volunteers is 39 years -they are not necessarily very young people - and what they represent for global solidarity and engagement is important. In the countries where we work, we also train domestic volunteers. Every country has its very unique forms of volunteerism, and we can say that volunteerism is an enormous resource for development.

## **IPU PUBLICATION**

### ***Volunteerism and Legislation: A Guidance Note (2004)***

This Guidance Note was jointly produced by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC). The Guidance Note results from a survey carried out among a selection of parliaments, governments and Red Cross National Societies. It is a practical tool aimed at assisting parliaments and other actors in developing an enabling legal environment for volunteerism. The publication highlights the principal considerations and provisions required in any legal framework for the further development of volunteerism. It examines the main areas of law that can impact on volunteerism, and proposes some key elements to be taken into account in the relevant legislative processes.

This publication is available in English, French & Spanish, free of charge, from the IPU Secretariat or can be downloaded from the IPU web site ([www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)).



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