

# The World of Parliaments

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**Special guest :**  
**Mr. Raymond Forni,**  
**President of the French National Assembly**

*IPU could become “parliamentary arm” of UN*

**Q : In an era of globalisation, is policy still made in Parliament?**

**Raymond Forni :** Globalisation does not concern parliaments specifically; rather, it affects all national institutions alike, executive, parliamentary or judicial, as very few questions today are exclusively national. Yet even before the pace of globalisation began to pick up in recent years, France was grappling with this problem as part of the building of Europe, which it was involved in from the start and which has led it gradually to adjust the functioning of its institutions.

I myself am firmly convinced that the role and influence of parliaments are not going to recede when decisions are taken at an international level because the people, acting through their elected representatives, can and must be involved with creating legal standards and overseeing governments. The Nation remains the essential framework for democratic expression. Peoples exercise a choice in their own countries by voting in free elections. More than the sovereignty of States, sovereignty above all belongs to the people.

In addition, globalisation helps to awaken fresh understanding. The speed at which information spreads, its transparency and its proliferation all guarantee better knowledge of the economic, social or political changes taking place throughout the world. World political opinion now exists and is becoming more structured. It influences major decisions and generates its own form of status quo.

In a world that is becoming more unified, national parliaments cannot merely “rubber stamp” standards adopted within a supra-national framework. As far as the building of Europe is concerned, this risk may be ruled out now that our assemblies



Mr. Raymond Forni,  
President of the French National Assembly

intervene in the phase prior to the drafting of EU texts and now that the most important questions may be settled in public sittings, after close scrutiny by each assembly's delegation to the European Union.

Moreover, the European Union is a good example of the crucial role of parliaments, because the founding treaties introduced a procedure providing for joint decision-making between the European Parliament and the Council with respect to all major common policies.

**Q : How can we increase awareness of parliaments and their work?**

**R.F. :** This is a major concern for our Assembly. Although individual MPs are always known to constituents for their work on the local level, citizens are still not sufficiently familiar with all facets of the day-to-day activities of Parliament.

We should bear in mind the fact that the influence exerted by parliaments does not derive solely from their power but also and above all from the values they embody, from the role they play in the drafting of legislation, from their capacity to sensitize and mobilize public opinion and from

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the trust generated by the steps they take to improve the people's welfare.

Accordingly, we have simultaneously strengthened oversight of the Executive and beefed up Parliament's systems for gathering information on societal problems of direct concern to citizens: the number of fact-finding committees and information missions dealing with such extremely diverse subjects as food security, safety at sea, money laundering, the state and management of prisons or business tribunals, problems relating to town and country planning and so forth has risen sharply.

We have also given higher priority to legislative texts sponsored by Parliament that focus on societal issues. To mention two recent examples, both the laws on relations in unmarried couples – what we call the Civil Solidarity Pact – and the ongoing debate on the legal system for passing on a family name to children originated in such bills.

Lastly, we have developed a modern and diversified communication policy. Each year, the National Children's Parliament contributes to the civic education of future citizens. The organization of workshops on topical issues, the launching of a parliamentary TV channel and the development of our Internet site, where each and every one can follow the drafting of a law, consult records of public or committee debates, access minutes of hearings and information reports or contact an MP or a political group all serve to heighten awareness of the wide-ranging activities performed by Parliament.

**Q : How can we strengthen the role of parliaments on the international scene?**

**R.F. :** First of all, there is a need to work towards the establishment of international assemblies. The UN, WTO and the other international organizations must open up more to the people, to world public opinion, to international civil society. The cooperation agreement which the Union and the UN signed in 1986 was an extremely positive first step aimed at associating our parliaments with the United Nations. In the same spirit, the MPs present at the Seattle Conference adopted a resolution calling for the establishment of a WTO Parliamentary Assembly. I support these initiatives, which in my view are an essential step in the right direction.

Yet the international activities of national parliaments also require revamping. There is an urgent need for specialized bodies that regularly oversee major multilateral international negotiations, acquiring specific technical skills in the process. This is the case within the European Union, where all parliaments have set

up specialized bodies for European affairs or commissioned members of existing bodies to follow the Union's activities. We can institute more such bodies, for example on multilateral trade negotiations.

And since our planet is called on to "network", why not link these specialized bodies up with each other? Bringing together MPs from different countries who have acquired such skills is an essential function of parliamentary diplomacy. It enables them to compare the way in which public opinion in each country assesses the negotiations and to compare their own appreciations. Little by little, this approach will give rise to a global vision of problems that have themselves become global.

Globalization upsets the patterns underlying our daily democratic life. In a way, everything is international now, and the international dimension affects policies implemented nationally. As a result, we must rethink the very notion of representative democracy. Because NGOs are often at the vanguard of civil society, because many of our citizens feel that policies today fail to represent their aspirations forcefully or truthfully enough, we must find new ways of representing civil society.

**Q : Can parliaments act as relays or mediators between decision-makers and civil society, both nationally and internationally?**

**R.F. :** This question comes as a bit of a surprise, because acting as mediators is in my view the minimum expression of the natural role of parliaments: ever since they came into being, parliaments have not contented themselves with merely being consulted; if only through popular consent to taxation (which is often their origin, historically speaking), they have also been associated with the decisions taken and have overseen their application.

Moreover, as we can see, international organizations are increasingly feeling the need to establish parliamentary bodies, deriving from national parliaments, alongside their ministerial ones, which emanate from governments. Up until the end of the 90s, only States were fully-fledged partners in international negotiations. Negotiators are now subject to manifold pressures, and it is not uncommon for them to hold fora attended by NGOs on the fringe of official discussions.

I myself am firmly convinced that major international decisions can no longer be taken without debate, preparation and a modicum of democratic practice. I believe that our parliaments must be associated with talks at a preliminary stage if they are subsequently to adopt the texts resulting from them.

**Q : The IPU plans to give a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation. What means can it employ to achieve this goal and in what fields can the IPU become a key player?**

**R.F. :** The determination of the French National Assembly to strengthen its activities in the field of international cooperation can only benefit from the IPU's involvement and dynamism in the same area.

As I have already proposed, the Inter-Parliamentary Union could over the long run become a true Parliamentary Assembly of the United Nations, be consulted by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and make proposals to those bodies. Moreover, the IPU, in its efforts to ensure that parliaments are represented in specialized UN agencies, could over time become the "parliamentary arm" of the UN. Here, it has gained credibility by showing that it could also help to achieve major international breakthroughs: among many other examples I could mention, it played a pioneering role in efforts to ban anti-personnel mines.

I would also like to pay a tribute to the many inter-parliamentary cooperation programmes run by the IPU, particularly in the furtherance of the rule of law. Indeed, there are many more parliamentary democracies today than a decade ago. The transition from dictatorship to democracy is not always easy. It is a moral obligation for the young democracies to make sure that the first elections are democratic and properly conducted; it is also in their interests to do so. Subsequently, the establishment of parliamentary institutions may also give rise to all sorts of difficulties – juridical, material or technical. An organization as old and deeply rooted as the IPU is in a position to provide the input required to ensure that young democracies function properly. This is precisely what it has done whenever such help has been sought from it, and our Assembly actively supports its efforts.

By focusing on fundamental rights in international relations, the IPU intends to move away from an overly restrictive conception of State prerogatives which sometimes limits national diplomatic activity and to ensure that the freedom of speech enjoyed by MPs serves the humanist values and democratic principles that are the very foundation of national parliaments.

The IPU is also at the heart of the major issues facing the international community, such as sustainable development, partnership for development, the fight against discrimination, gender equality, and others. ■

## Editorial

# IPU launches a brand new quarterly review

At a time when the world economy is in the throes of globalisation, is politics still conducted in parliament? At a time when technologies have taken a huge leap forward and information crosses every frontier, is the most quintessentially democratic of our institutions still a privileged forum in which decisions are taken which govern the behaviour of States, or are the decrees that shape the future of peoples' lives increasingly made elsewhere? For its part, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) intends to become more assertive on today's international scene and to plead the cause of greater participation by people and their direct representatives in the decisions which crucially affect their daily lives.

There can be no true debate without the proper forum. The IPU knows that it is vital to have a place in the media and among the public at large. With this in mind, the Union is proposing to bring out a new publication entitled "*The World of Parliaments - the IPU Quarterly Review*". The new quarterly will not only seek to make the activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union better known, but also serve as a vehicle for the proposals of its 141 member parliaments with respect to international cooperation.

The objectives of the publication are presented in the lead article by Dr. Najma Heptullah, President of the IPU Council and Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. *The World of Parliaments* will, of course, discuss the challenges which the IPU intends to take up after the Conference of Presiding Officers, held last year at the United Nations in New York. Some of these challenges are elucidated in the interviews given by the President of the French National Assembly, Raymond Forni, and by five of the parliamentarians who attended the recent preparatory committee for the Parliamentary Meeting on International Trade which IPU is convening in Geneva on 8 and 9 June 2001. The importance of this event is also highlighted in an article by the Secretary General, Anders B. Johnsson. Last but not least, *The World of Parliaments*, which replaces the IPU Bulletin, will keep abreast of major parliamentary developments in different countries.

Founded 112 years ago, the IPU has a rich experience of over a century of world history that is unrivalled among the world organisations. The first issue contains an article on the 100th anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the pacifist MP Frédéric Passy, joint founder of the Union along with English MP William Randal Cramer. Passy was awarded the prize in 1901 with Henri Dunant, the Swiss founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

*The World of Parliaments - the IPU Quarterly Review* also describes IPU activities to promote democracy throughout the world. Democracy, a common denominator of peoples if ever there was one, continues to inspire both thinkers and practitioners in today's political world just as it did in yesterday's. ■

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MESSAGE OF THE  
PRESIDENT OF IPU COUNCIL  
DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA

As a new century begins and access to information becomes ever more vital to organisations throughout the world and to the public at large, the IPU has decided to launch a new publication. The publication - a quarterly review - will offer insights into the wide range of activities in which the Union is involved and highlights on parliamentary life. A screen version will be available on the IPU Web site [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org) for those who like to surf the Net and on paper for those who prefer thumbing through a periodical at home, or on their travels.

The publication will not lay claim to be the voice of parliaments but will try to provide a forum for MPs of the world to express their views on issues of interest to all citizens. Moreover, it will enhance parliaments' visibility in the press and among the broader public.

Naturally, this new product will look at major IPU activities in the field of technical cooperation and assistance to parliaments, partnership between men and women in politics, and human rights. There will also be articles by specialists on contemporary issues facing parliamentary democracies in a world that is in the throes of globalisation, as well as reviews of historical events.

The IPU enters the new millennium with the objective of making democracy more participative, inclusive and interactive. It is hoped that the new publication will contribute to achieving this aim. ■

# Event : *IPU and International Trade*

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) will organise the first Parliamentary Meeting on International Trade, on 8 and 9 June 2001, in Geneva. This Meeting will be chaired by the President of the IPU Council, Dr. Najma Heptulla and will hear a statement by the Director General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), Mr. Mike Moore, who will also take questions from the participants.

The overall theme for the June Meeting is "For a free, just and equitable multilateral trade system : Providing a parliamentary dimension". The subjects to be debated will be

"Globalisation from trade perspective: the role and action of parliament as a relay between government and the people"; "WTO and the current international trading system : the role of parliaments in the field of legislation" and "Parliamentary oversight with respect to future trade negotiations, particularly from the development perspective".

**MPs present at the Preparatory Committee which took place in Geneva 23 and 24 February 2001, give us their opinion on the importance of the June Parliamentary Meeting.**



Photo: IPU/H. Salgado

From left to right: Mr Mike Moore, Director general of WTO; Mr Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary General of IPU; Dr Najma Heptulla, President of IPU Council

## Mr. Kimmo Kiljunen MP of Finland

This parliamentary meeting on international trade is a new opportunity and challenge for the IPU, as well as for WTO. For the WTO this is the first serious effort to create a global network with parliamentarians and I think this might be a realistic way of doing it with an existing organisation, namely the IPU, instead of creating a WTO assembly, like many organisations have done, for example the Council of Europe. I think this is a good point to utilise IPU. But for the IPU it is also a challenge, because IPU up to date has been an inter-parliamentary organisation. It organises its meetings between parliamentarians. Now it is a new challenge for it to address the question of intergovernmental organisations. That is why for the IPU itself, it should rely more on the resources existing in different parliaments, much more broadly than today. IPU should recruit participants with a specific expertise, for instance international trade. Similarly, your cooperation with the United Nations, should obviously include people who have focused on international development issues and security, so that IPU can become the world organisation of parliaments, and then reflect the parliaments' views towards the institutions, in this case the WTO.

IPU is a very interesting body in international terms, because it is representing the people itself. Of course, we have NGOs speaking on behalf of people, but the parliaments, in democracies, are the representative bodies, vis-à-vis the people, and of course, the IPU, as an umbrella organisation of the parliaments reflects that particular position. The IPU should be a more substance-oriented body, then it will really be an important potential institution for reflecting parliamentary views to a global audience. That could also provide a response to civil society because parliaments are chosen by civil society. We are the legislators in our countries and we represent the people vis-à-vis the government, whose actions we oversee.

## Mr. Kobsak Chutikul MP of Thailand

The main objective of the Parliamentary meeting on international trade is to provide a parliamentary dimension to trade negotiations. We realise from the lessons learnt from Seattle that there is a problem of, at least, perception among civil society. The people are concerned about globalisation and the benefits of trade liberalisation and that was a major sticking point that led to what we now realise was the failure of Seattle. In the two years since Seattle, there has still not been adequate movement forward. One of the problems still remains the perception among civil society in various countries that there is something wrong with the multilateral trade system, that it is not transparent enough, that it is not representative enough, but at the same time, on the other hand, it will be difficult for the WTO, as an intergovernmental negotiating forum, to allow various civil society groups into the negotiating process.

The negotiating process still has to be confined to governmental representatives. So from the parliamentary side we believe we can act as the go-between, as a bridge. First of all to convey popular concerns since we are elected representatives from the people, popular concern about trade, about globalisation, about liberalisation, the effects it has on the environment, on social well being, on various national cultures. We can convey these concerns to the WTO and, through the press, to the wider public. At the same time, we can then listen to WTO, to various trade experts about what are the real benefits of trade, where are trade negotiations going, what are the main issues. In turn, we can act as the go-between, to inform our own public in various countries of the wider picture of how causes and effects can be balanced, in order to help to foster a multilateral trade system that will be of benefit to all peoples in all countries.

## Mr. Fangbo Cai Vice-Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China

It is important for MPs and the public to get to know the WTO better. Thanks to this meeting, members of parliament and the wider public will gain a better understanding of what WTO does. The globalisation of the economy has aroused fears, concerns and worries. These fears must be allayed. The other problem that must be tackled is the future. WTO is going to try and launch a new round of trade talks. We must ask ourselves how they should be approached best, so that both developing and developed countries stand to benefit.

I must emphasise that the globalisation of trade creates problems, especially for the developing countries. The gap is widening between the rich and the poor. Ways must be found to narrow that gap so that everyone can benefit from globalisation. Trade should also be developed in all countries and MPs have a major role to play in that area.

Mr. Ricardo Alaniz Posada  
MP of Mexico

The IPU has an important role to play. There are countries today which sign trade treaties and do not even have a legislature to ratify them. The Executive does everything and nobody else is entitled to speak or vote. So I would begin by saying that it is interesting for these countries to see how others act. For example, in the case of Mexico, the Senate decides whether or not to ratify a free trade treaty. On the practical side of trade, we need to promote laws that would generate more employment in each country.

We are proposing that the legislature should authorise a limited contribution by banks on their interest earnings so that countries like my own, which are not viewed as entirely risk free, could spend that money on more social programmes.

In Geneva, we also discussed the fact that in Africa and Latin America there are people who earn less than a dollar a day. These people need greater job opportunities so that they can earn more, and in this way stimulate national and international trade.

In the parliamentary meeting in June, we could also talk about how to improve legislation in order to facilitate trade among countries. The point is for these ideas to be shifted from the theoretical realm to practice. Our duty as legislators includes facilitating trade.

Mr. Bernard Okindja  
MP of Gabon

We MPs are the representatives of civil society. Ever since its founding, the WTO, a structure different from the GATT, enacts new rules aimed at regulating world trade. And this poses problems, as can be seen from the events in Seattle or Porto Alegre. The IPU's initiative to organize a meeting on international trade to take a look at what is not working is praiseworthy indeed. As a forum for parliamentarians who represent the peoples, the IPU and parliamentarians can reflect on this topic together. We can work out a position and submit it to the WTO. Before the arrival of the present Director General (editor's note: Mike Moore, a former MP), there was no possibility of discussing with the WTO. Today, the WTO's provisions permit a dialogue. Thus, we have an opportunity to give our point of view. This approach should give us a better grasp of certain aspects that the WTO does not see, for it does not have the ability to solve everything. We hope that the WTO will take our future suggestions into consideration.

Mrs. Béatrice Marre  
MP of France

The IPU could be the primary basis for the international democratic structure of world governance. We could begin with the WTO and then go on to other international organisations. In practical terms, this can mean that the IPU can decide to bring together groups of MPs, each of whom specialises in monitoring a given organization. For example, one group could specialise in monitoring the WTO, another could follow the IMF, the World Bank, etc. This would ensure that international organisations have partners for dialogue representing democratically elected MPs. If the IPU opts for this approach, it would allow us to contribute everything we have already done, thereby enabling us to establish a dialogue based on a different point of view than governments.

# The first global parliamentary meeting on trade

*Anders B. Johnsson, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union explains the importance of the Parliamentary Meeting on the International Trade organised by the IPU on 8 and 9 June 2001*

**A**t last year's millennium summit the Heads of State and government declared *The central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalisation becomes a positive force for all the world's people. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone, and to freeing the entire human race from want.*

In order to meet those ambitious goals, the Millennium Declaration prescribes *an open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system.* Participation is also required by different institutional players, including parliaments.

The IPU has long argued on similar lines, most recently at the meeting it organised in cooperation with the Thai National Assembly last year on the occasion of the tenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

What, then, is the role of parliaments in international trade? Over the last twelve months the IPU has worked closely with representatives of parliaments, governments and the World Trade Organization in preparing a first parliamentary event to seek the answer to this question.

The result is the Parliamentary Meeting which the IPU is convening in Geneva on 8 and 9 June this year. The theme is to be: *For a free, fair and equitable multilateral trading system: Providing a parliamentary dimension.*

The event will bring together parliamentarians who specialise in international trade issues in their respective parliament. It will provide them with an opportunity to examine globalisation from a trade perspective and to discuss the legislative and oversight role of parliaments in relation to WTO, the current multilateral trading system and future trade negotiations.

The parliamentary committee that was set up to prepare the event met in Geneva in late February and finalised the arrangements for the meeting. It set up the agenda that will examine the parliamentary perspective on three core issues: globalisation and trade, the current trading system and future trade negotiations.

In every country, parliament and its members have a constitutional responsi-

bility to represent the people. It is their role to give voice to their concerns and aspirations for a better life. This is no less true on issues relating to globalisation and trade which directly affect the lives of people everywhere. The meeting will therefore start with a discussion about people's day-to-day concerns relating to trade and the role that parliaments can play to address them.

A second session will focus on one of the two major roles of parliament and its members, namely to legislate. Much trade takes place within a multilateral rules-based system that needs to be translated into national laws and regulations. This session will serve to exchange views on current trade issues that require legislative action, such as a review of the implementation of the Uruguay Round Agreements, on-going negotiations in agriculture or services, accession of new WTO members, an ever growing number of dispute settlement cases and the rise in bilateral and regional trade negotiations and agreements.

The third working session directly relates to the parliamentary "oversight" function. Government is accountable to parliament and the latter monitors and seeks to influence government policy and action. This role is crucial for parliament and its members to be able to truly represent the people and takes on special importance in relation to new trade negotiations. This session therefore offers opportunities to discuss parliament's role in building the necessary consensus for promoting free and fair trade *that is a positive force for all the world's people.*

This meeting offers members of parliament who work on trade issues with an unrivalled opportunity to exchange views and experiences with colleagues in other parliaments and with government trade representatives. It is a salient example of IPU's action to provide a parliamentary dimension to international cooperation. Indeed, it is part of the Organisation's follow-up to the Conference of Presiding Officers of Nations Parliaments which paved the way for parliaments to bring a unique contribution to the work of the multilateral inter-governmental institutions. ■

# Technical Cooperation and Assistance to Parliaments



*The Programme for the Study and Promotion of Representative Institutions (Reprinst), is one of the operational tools whereby the IPU undertakes multifaceted action to foster democracy. Since 1973, Reprinst has devoted a substantial part of its resources to strengthening the capacity of national parliaments. In this regard, the Union is playing a key role as designer, implementer and co-ordinator of assistance to parliaments relying on several donors for financial and other support. The IPU's most important partner is the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), as this UN agency currently finances over 70% of projects of assistance to parliaments implemented and/or supervised by the IPU. The European Commission, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) are the other major donors of IPU.*

*The IPU helps parliaments, especially emerging democracies and developing countries, in building up their capacity to discharge more effectively their constitutional responsibilities, including oversight of government action. The following is a list of the IPU's main projects in different fields:*

## **Building new parliaments**

### **East Timor**

The IPU is planning an exploratory mission to Dili to discuss with the authorities of the interim legislature, the National Council, possible assistance in the run-up to and following the legislative elections billed for August 2001.

### **The Gambia**

The IPU and the Parliament of The Gambia have begun talks on implementing a second phase of the project launched in 1995. The first phase of the project helped put in place the structures of and equip the Parliament following its reinstatement in 1997. The second phase is aimed at helping the Parliament consolidate its structures, streamline its working procedures and train staff and MPs.

### **Tajikistan**

Against the background of the peace agreement signed in 1997 that brought to an end the civil war that had begun after independence in 1992, the IPU, acting at the request of the parliamentary authorities and UNDP, provided advisory services that enabled the Parliament to review its rules of procedure. Assistance was also provided for the printing of the new rules.

## **Assistance to parliaments facing conflict or post-conflict situations**

### **Burundi**

Since 1998, the IPU has extended assistance to the National Assembly to enable it to play a key role in the implementation of the Arusha process. The NA is called upon to play an even greater role in the peace agreement signed in Arusha in August 2000. IPU assistance has included repair work on buildings, computers, photocopiers, and other technical facilities. A car pool of five vehicles is at the disposal of the National Assembly to enable parliamentarians to travel to their constituencies to preach the message of peace. Seminars have also been organised for MPs and staff on the role and functioning of a parliament, particularly in the context of the country's reconstruction. Support has also been provided to documentation services, including the purchase of books for the library and training for library staff.

### **Rwanda**

The reconstruction of a democratic Rwanda, after the genocide that claimed over a million lives, is one of the priorities of the IPU. In this context, the IPU and the National Assembly have signed two agreements on projects of assistance to the parliamentary Human Rights Commission and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. These projects aim

at strengthening the capacity of the NA to defend and promote human rights and to ensure that Rwandan women can contribute effectively to the drafting of the new Rwandan Constitution.

## Training

### Cambodia

This project is intended for both Houses of the Cambodian Parliament and emphasises the professional development of both MPs and staff of the two Houses. Activities include seminars and study visits abroad for staff. Advisory support is also foreseen to help the Parliament rationalise its working methods and procedures.

### Equatorial Guinea

This project has been initiated in collaboration with the European Commission and is aimed at strengthening the capacities of the House of Representatives. The focus is on the training of parliamentary staff, to enable them to provide effective support to MPs in the fulfilment of their duties. Also planned are awareness-building activities on the role of Parliament in the context of the Constitution of Equatorial Guinea.

### Gabon

The project of assistance to the two Houses of the Parliament (National Assembly and Senate) concerns the staff responsible for transcribing parliamentary proceedings. The IPU concluded an agreement with the Speakers of both Houses of Parliament for the training of twelve staff. Training is also expected to be extended to other areas of the Parliament's work.

## Information and new technologies

### Kyrgyzstan

The activities undertaken under this project are intended to strengthen the Parliament's law-drafting capacity and improve Members' understanding of major issues on which they have to legislate. In this regard, advisory services have been provided through experienced parliamentary experts. Efforts have also been devoted to introducing a modern documentation service that makes optimum use of the opportunity offered by information technologies including the Internet. The project also includes information seminars for Members of Parliament. A three-day workshop was run in early November 2000 on the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This event, organised in cooperation with UNITAR, was also attended by MPs from Kazakhstan.

### Viet Nam

Under this project, the IPU has provided assistance in setting up a computer network in the National Assembly and developing databases relevant to its work.

## Good governance

### Yemen

IPU's assistance to the Parliament of Yemen is provided as part of the Programme for Institutional Reform and Governance for Yemen, funded by UNDP. The agreement, signed by the IPU and the Parliament of Yemen, provides among other things for IPU advisory services on constitutional issues, especially the streamlining of relations between the Executive and the Legislative and the organisation of seminars for MPs and parliamentary staff on the role and working methods of Parliament and the improvement of

# WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS

## KEY PLAYERS ON THE POLITICAL STAGE

At the beginning of the third millennium, women are asserting themselves as key players on the political scene. The results of the forty or so elections held in the year 2000 show that the number of women winning seats in parliament is steadily rising throughout the world. However, despite this encouraging trend, women have not passed the 15% mark overall. At the beginning of 2001, the average figures for women in the world's parliaments were 14.2% for the lower Chamber and 13.2% for the Senate. Taking both houses together, women MPs account for 14.1% of total membership.

In 2000, developing countries recorded larger increases in the proportion of women in national parliaments (e.g. + 10% in Peru, + 9.9% in Tajikistan, + 9.1% in Dominica, + 5.8% in Tanzania), than certain Western countries (e.g. in Canada, no change, + 0.7% in the United States). Worldwide, Croatia tops the list with a gain of 12.7%. Among the other European countries, Spain recorded an increase of 6.7% and elected Women presidents to both chambers of its parliament: a "first" in Europe and for the Western countries as a whole.

As of 1 January 2001, 25 chambers of national parliaments in 20 countries out of a total of 243 chambers in 179 States (64 States have a bicameral parliament) were headed by a woman. In addition to Spain, four developing countries - Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Jamaica and South Africa - have women at the helm in both houses of parliament. Moreover, women preside over two regional parliamentary assemblies, the European Parliament and Latin American Parliament.

However, women lost ground in El Salvador, Zimbabwe and other countries where previously they were in a relatively strong position.

With an average of 38.8% women MPs, the Nordic countries are moving steadily towards parity in parliament. By way of contrast, legislative assemblies in the Arab countries are still firmly controlled by men (barely 3.9% women on average). In other regions, women account for between 12.1% (sub-Saharan Africa) and 15.3% (the Americas) and - with a 3 point gain over five years - have definitely improved their showing.

Though laudable enough, the trend falls far short of the criteria for democracy as understood by the IPU. In its 1997 Declaration on Democracy, the IPU - the Council of which is chaired by a woman, Dr. Najma Heptulla, Deputy Chairperson of the Council of States of India - states that "*The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences*".

### Calendar of forthcoming legislative elections

Peru: 09 April 2001	Italy: 13 May 2001
Senegal: 29 April 2001	Cyprus: 27 May 2001
Philippines: 11 May 2001	Bangladesh: 12 June 2001

The outcome of the elections can be found on the IPU web site (<http://www.ipu.org>), Parline Database and Women in Parliaments.

# Parliamentary Developments

## Bahrain

On 14-15 February 2001, in a referendum, the first one since independence from Great Britain in 1971, an overwhelming majority (98.4 per cent) of Bahrain's voters approved the National Action Charter. This Charter institutes constitutional changes and economic and social reforms and provides for a partially elected parliament, a constitutional monarchy and an independent judiciary. Other significant reforms include voting rights for all citizens, men and women, above the age of 21, the right of women to run for office and the establishment of a body to investigate public complaints. The new Charter also establishes that all citizens are equal regardless of religion, sex or class.

The referendum was the culmination of a liberalisation process that Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Issa -Khalifa launched after he came to power in 1999 following the death of his father.

The new Charter is expected to take effect by 2004.

## Bulgaria

On 21 March 2001, the Parliament took partial account of a veto by President Petar Stoyanov and amended the law recently passed on political parties. Legislators struck from the law a provision that would have required parties that obtained less than 1 per cent in the 1997 elections to re-register and prove they have at least 500 members. Mr Stoyanov had sent the law back to the Parliament for reconsideration, stating that it was curbing political pluralism. The lawmakers overrode the President's other objection relating to anonymous donations, which the law allows for. They limited the amount of a single anonymous donation to 25 percent of the subsidy parties received from the State. Subsidies are based on the electoral performance of parties in the last elections.

## Chad

In February 2001, the Parliament approved by 92 votes and 28 abstentions a law postponing general elections by one year and thereby also extended the term of the Parliament for the same period until April 2002. The ruling Patriotic Salvation Movement justified the vote on the grounds of the lack of funds available for legislative elections in the current year. A presidential election is due to be held on 20 May and 1 July 2001.

## Comoros

In February 2001, a unity agreement signed by the political leaders of the three islands, Grande Comore, Mohéli and Anjouan, formally reinstated the Comoros as one federated entity after three years of conflict. In 1997, the islands

of Anjouan and Mohéli declared their independence from the Comoros and a subsequent attempt by the government to re-establish control over the rebellious islands by force failed.

Under the new agreement, the islands will adopt a new constitution which will go to a referendum by the end of June 2001. Grande Comore military ruler Colonel Azali Assoumani will head the transitional administration which will oversee the establishment of an electoral commission. The current regimes in Mohéli and Anjouan will remain in place until the referendum.

## Croatia

After a walkout by deputies from the opposition Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ), on 14 March 2001, the House of Representatives approved several proposed constitutional changes, including one to abolish the House of Counties. The HDZ had demanded that the measure also be submitted to this House, where the HDZ has a majority.

## Fiji

On 1 March 2001, the Court of Appeal declared the military-backed interim government of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase illegal. Mr Qarase was installed last year after the failed coup d'Etat in which Mr George Speight, an ethnic Fijian businessman had taken the nation's first ethnic Indian prime minister and several members of the Parliament hostage.

## Haiti

On 3 March 2001, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide appointed a new Electoral Council. The previous electoral authority had been accused of rigging legislative elections in favour of Mr Aristide's party, the Lavalas Family. President Aristide said that the new Electoral Council would organize runoffs for 10 Senate seats that were won by candidates of his party, but gave no date for the voting. The main opposition parties boycotted the presidential election in November 2000, alleging that legislative elections in May 2000 had been rigged to give 10 Senate victories to Lavalas candidates. The new nine-member Electoral Council includes two Aristide supporters and no members of the 15-party opposition alliance

## Israel

On 7 March 2001, the Knesset adopted a new version of the Basic Law on Government, by a vote of 72 to 37 and three abstentions. The new law phases out direct election of the Prime Minister and restores the system that Israel had used until the 1996 elections, i.e. voters cast a ballot for one party and the Knesset seats are distributed proportionally

to the votes. The previous law was widely blamed for the instability of the last two Israeli governments.

The new law also establishes that a no confidence motion against the government will need at least 61 votes in the Knesset (out of a total of 120) to pass, rather than a simple majority. Furthermore, in order to replace a government, the opposition will have to present an alternative government and prove it has the 61-seat majority needed to win confidence.

## Lesotho

Elections scheduled for May 2001 were postponed until early 2002. This postponement was due partly to a disagreement between the two chambers of the Parliament over the number of members in the National Assembly. While the House wanted a mix of 80 candidates elected by simple majority and 40 elected by proportional representation, the Senate preferred an 80-50 mix. The dissent ended when the Senate agreed that the National Assembly would consist of 120 members.

## Sierra Leone

Parliament approved, by a unanimous vote, a bill postponing the presidential and legislative elections for six months. Under the Constitution, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's term of office should have ended on 28 March 2001, while that of the Parliament was due to expire on 1 April 2001. President Kabbah asked the Parliament to consider this extension, the maximum allowed by the Constitution, upon the recommendation of the National Electoral Commission, because the civil war and the continuing rebel control of a large proportion of the country made it impossible to hold another poll. The postponement was also motivated by the fact that the government was unable to meet the cost of the elections.

## Singapore

On 15 February 2001, the Political Donations Act (PDA) entered into force. It prevents foreign groups from interfering in domestic politics through donations to political associations and candidates in the presidential and parliamentary elections. Political parties and their candidates are prohibited from accepting donations from persons or bodies that are not permissible donors and anonymous donations are restricted. Permissible donors are defined as individuals who are Singapore citizens and are at least 21 years old, as well as Singapore-controlled companies that carry on business wholly or mainly in the country. The Act also imposes reporting requirements for donors who in any single year have made multiple donations with an aggregate value of 10,000 Singapore dollars or more to a political association.

## Yemen

On 20 February 2001, 73 % of Yemeni voters approved a constitutional amendment lengthening the terms of the President and members of Parliament from five to seven years and from four to six years respectively. This amendment also establishes a second chamber of Parliament, a Council, to be appointed by the President.

## Flash - Flash - Flash - Flash - Flash

### PRESIDENT FIDEL CASTRO OPENS 105th IPU CONFERENCE

At the invitation of the Cuban Parliament, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) held its 105th statutory Conference and related meetings from 1 to 7 April 2001, at the Havana Convention Centre. The inaugural ceremony took place on Sunday 1st April, in the presence of the President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba, Mr. Fidel Castro Ruz, the President of the IPU Council, Mrs Najma Heptulla, and the President of the National Assembly of the People's Power, Mr. Ricardo Alarcón.

The representatives of IPU's 141 member Parliaments and five associated regional parliamentary assemblies examined more particularly "Securing observance of the principles of international law in the interests of world peace and security" and "Education and culture as essential factors in promoting the participation of men and women in political life and as prerequisites for the development of peoples".

The 105th Conference also gave the delegations an opportunity to hold bilateral meetings and examine conflicts in several parts of the world, in particular the Middle East, Cyprus and the Great Lakes area in Africa.

### IPU COMMITTEE FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUPPORTS THE RIGHT TO FOOD

The Committee for Sustainable Development held its main annual session from 12 to 14 March 2001 at IPU Headquarters in Geneva. Created in 1995, the Committee elected Mr. Paul Günter (Switzerland) as President. Among other items, the Committee discussed food security and the right to food.

The Committee heard presentations by Ambassador M. Manfredo Incisa di Camerana, Special Advisor to the Director-General of FAO and by Mr. Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur on the Right of Food to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

The UN Special Rapporteur was seeking collaboration with the IPU and, through it, with national parliaments. According to the Committee, copies of Mr. Ziegler's report should be made available to national parliaments. The Committee also proposed that the Special Rapporteur be invited to the IPU session in Ouagadougou in September 2001 to discuss matters of national legislation on the right to food in a dialogue with MPs attending the session.

Frédéric Passy (France)

Co-founder of the Inter-Parliamentary Union  
with William Randal Cramer (United Kingdom)

Nobel Peace Prize in 1901 with the ICRC founder, Henri Dunant (Switzerland)

### "A Pacifist before his Time"

Frédéric Passy (May 20, 1822-June 12, 1912) was born in Paris and lived there his life of ninety years. The tradition of the French civil service was strong in Passy's family, his uncle, Hippolyte Passy (1793-1880), rising to become a cabinet minister under both Louis Philippe and Louis Napoleon. Educated as a lawyer, Frédéric Passy entered the civil service at the age of twenty-two as an accountant in the State Council, but left after three years to devote himself to systematic study of economies. He emerged as a theoretical economist in 1857 with his *Mélanges économiques*, a collection of essays he had published in the course of the research, and he secured his scholarly reputation with a series of lectures delivered in 1860-1861 at the University of Montpellier and later published in two volumes under the title *Leçons d'économie politique...* Passy's passionate belief in education found expression in *De la propriété intellectuelle* (1859) and *La démocratie et l'instruction* (1864). For these contributions, among others, he was elected in 1877 to membership in the Académie des sciences morales et politiques, a unit of the Institut de France.

Passy was not, however, a cloistered scholar; he was a man of action. In 1867, encouraged by his leadership of public opinion in trying to avert possible war between France and Prussia over the Luxembourg question, he founded the "Ligue internationale et permanente de la paix". When the Ligue became a casualty of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, he reorganized it under the title "Société française des amis de la paix" which in turn gave way to the more specifically oriented "Société française pour l'arbitrage entre nations", established in 1889.

Passy carried on his efforts within the government as well. He was elected to the Chamber of Deputies in 1881, again in 1885, and defeated in 1889. In the Chamber, he supported legislation favourable to labour, especially an act relating to industrial accidents, opposed the colonial policy of the government, drafted a proposal for disarmament, and presented a resolution calling for arbitration of international disputes.

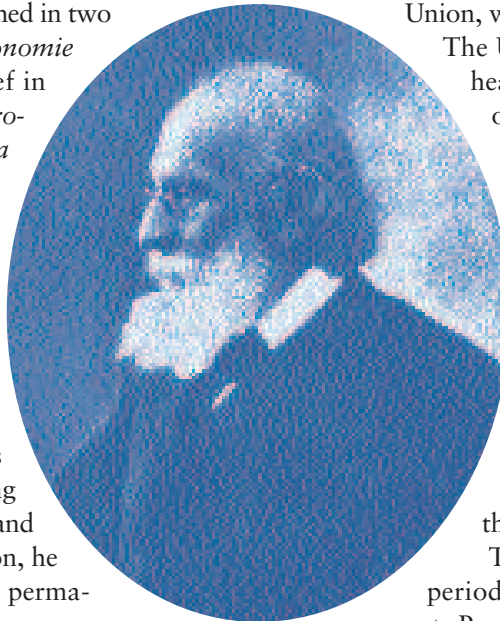
His parliamentary interest in arbitration was whetted by Randal Cramer's success in guiding through the British Parliament a resolution stipulating that England and the United States should refer to arbitration any disputes between them not settled by the normal methods of diplomacy. In 1888 Cramer headed a delegation of nine British members of Parliament who met in Paris with a delegation of twenty-four French deputies, headed by Passy, to discuss arbitration and to lay the groundwork for an organisation to advance its acceptance. The next year, fifty-six French parliamentarians, twenty-eight British and scattered representatives from the parliaments of Italy, Spain, Denmark, Hungary, Belgium, and the United States formed the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with Passy as one of its three presidents.

The Union, still in existence, established a headquarters to serve as a clearinghouse of ideas, and encouraged the formation of informal individual national parliamentary groups willing to support legislation leading to peace, especially through arbitration.

Passy's thought and action had unity. International peace was the goal, arbitration of disputes in international politics and free trade in goods the means, the national units making up the Inter-Parliamentary Union the initiating agents, the people the sovereign constituency.

Through his prodigious labours over a period of a half century in the peace movement, Passy became known as the "apostle of peace". He wrote unceasingly and vividly. His *Pour la paix* (1909), which came out when he was eighty-seven years old, is a personalized account - in lieu of an autobiography which he deplored - of his work for international peace, noting especially the founding of the Ligue, the "période décisive" when the Inter-Parliamentary Union was established, the development of peace congresses, and the value of the Hague Conference. ■

*Extract from: Peace 1901-1925-Nobel Lectures. Edited by Frederick W. Haberman (Professor of Communication Arts, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA). Published for the Nobel Foundation in 1972 by Elsevier Publishing Company.*



# Democracy, you say?

## Dixit

Democracy is both an ideal to be pursued and a mode of government to be applied according to modalities which reflect the diversity of experiences and cultural particularities without derogating from internationally recognized principles, norms and standards. It is thus a constantly perfected and always perfectible state or condition whose progress will depend upon a variety of political, social, economic, and cultural factors.

IPU, *Universal Declaration on Democracy*

As I see it, democracy should ensure that the weakest enjoy the same opportunities as the strongest. Only non-violence can achieve this goal.

Gandhi, text quoted in *All Men Are Brothers*

As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.

A. Lincoln, *Letters*\*

The worst of democracies is preferable by far to the best of dictatorships.

Ruy Barbosa, *Letters*\*

In general, barring scandalous exceptions, democracy has given the ordinary worker more dignity than he ever had before.

Sinclair Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*\*

Democracy is a political form of capitalism just as the soul is the form of the body according to Aristotle, or its idea, according to Spinoza.

Georges Bernanos, *Lettre aux Anglais*\*\*

If liberty could manage its affairs by itself, this would be democracy.

John dos Passos, *U.S.A.*\*\*

In democracy, liberty is to be supposed; for it is commonly held that no man is free in any government  
Aristotle, *Politics* (Lib. VI, Cap. ii. 350 BC)\*\*\*

\* *Le Dictionnaire des Citations du Monde Entier*

\*\* *Le Petit Philosophe de Poche*

\*\*\*Excerpt from *Democracy, its Principles and Achievement*, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 1998.

### SOME IPU PUBLICATIONS

Universal Declaration on Democracy (1997)

Democracy: Its Principles and Achievement (1998)

Declaration on Criteria for Free and Fair Elections (1994)

Free and Fair Elections: International Law and Practice, G.S. Goodwin-Gill (1994)

Codes of Conduct for Elections, G.S. Goodwin-Gill (1998)

The Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments (to be published in April 2001)

The Parliamentary Mandate (2000)

Presiding Officers of National Parliamentary Assemblies, G. Bergougnous (1997)

Seminar on parliaments and the budgetary process, Nairobi, Kenya (2001)

## Fewer than 15% of legislators female

Geneva (Reuters). Women are gaining ground in legislatures around the world but still account for fewer than 15% of members of all parliaments, a global parliamentary body says. In its annual survey, the Inter-Parliamentary Union said women make up 14% of the members of lower parliamentary houses and 13% of upper chambers, or senates. Women are more strongly represented in the Nordic countries of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland, where they hold an average of 39% of seats. (Women hold 21% of the seats in Canada's House of Commons).

Globe and Mail (Canada)

## IPU and the WTO

The Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union, a multilateral organisation representing 140 parliaments, on Saturday paved the way for what is going to be the first global dialogue between parliamentarians and the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

It is a step that might lead eventually to the participation of parliamentarians in the trade negotiations. Until now, parliamentarians came into the picture only at the time of ratifying multilateral agreements. To close the gap between final legislative consideration and the complex process of trade negotiations, IPU President Najma Heptulla has spearheaded the campaign for more "inclusive" participation of parliamentarians in the WTO activities.

Washington Trade Daily (USA)

## IPU mission in Cuba

MP Ivan Pilip and the former student leader Yan Buberik were released a few hours after they signed a document in which they admitted having breached Cuban law, according to the President of the Committee on Human Rights of Parliamentarians of the IPU, Juan Pablo Letelier. The two men, who were obliged to make amends before a group of foreign diplomats meeting with the Cuban Minister for Foreign Affairs, Felipe Pérez Roque, were rushed into a car and hastily left the Ministry, in the company of Mr Letelier and the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Anders Johnsson.

Associated Press (AP)

6 February 2001

... The two men were freed after they were taken to the Foreign Ministry, where they signed a statement saying they had unwittingly violated Cuban laws when they met with dissidents here in January, sources involved in the agreement told CNN.

In addition to apologizing to the Cuban people, they acknowledged having received money from Freedom House, a non-government organization in the United States that receives money from the US government to help support the dissident movement in Cuba.

Serving as intermediaries for the Czech government, Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and Juan Pablo Letelier, President of the group's human rights commission, brokered the deal after meeting with Cuban officials.

CNN.com

6 February 2001

Socialist MP Juan Pablo Letelier, as President of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, has managed to resolve the serious diplomatic rift dividing Cuba and the Czech Republic. Thanks to Mr Letelier's negotiations in Cuba, the Cuban Government has freed the two Czech citizens, one of whom is an MP, who had been detained for several days, accused by the Cuban authorities of a breach of security.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs (S) Heraldo Muñoz, telephoned Letelier on behalf of President Ricardo Lagos to congratulate him for his work "which made it possible to resolve a tense diplomatic situation involving two countries with which Chile has friendly relations."

La Tercera (Chile)

7 February 2001

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