

THE WORLD OF PARLIAMENTS



Photo IPU/H.Salgado



Speaker Baleka Mbete.

“We have an ongoing challenge to change the way of thinking”

Ms. Baleka Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa

ANC's national Chairperson Baleka Mbete is emerging as the most influential woman in politics in South Africa. In Geneva, during the last IPU Assembly, the Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa gave *The World of Parliaments* her views on the next IPU Assembly, to be held in April 2008 in Cape Town. See interview on page 2

IPU Committed to Reconciliation

This issue of the World of Parliaments features several articles on reconciliation. This theme is central to IPU's work to promote peace and cooperation through political dialogue. It will feature prominently at the 118th Assembly in Cape Town where members of parliament will have a first hand opportunity to learn about the South African reconciliation process. They will also attend a panel discussion with prominent political leaders sharing their experience of reconciliation and peace building. Reconciliation and the administration of justice is also the theme of the feature article written by a prominent South African personality, former Justice Richard Goldstone. A separate article describes the complex case of Sierra Leone and refers to IPU's programme to assist the Parliament of that country in promoting reconciliation. The articles describing President Casini's visit to the Middle East and IPU's contribution to the new United Nations initiative known as The Alliance of Civilizations touch on important facets of the reconciliation theme.

In this issue

IPU President in the Middle East	6
Latest statistics of Women in Politics	8
Parliaments tackle poverty in LDCs	12



Photo AFP

Former President and 1993 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Nelson Mandela: the key person of the reconciliation in South Africa.

“We have an ongoing challenge to change the way of thinking”

Ms. Baleka Mbete, Speaker of the National Assembly of South Africa

Q: Why is the IPU Assembly in Cape Town important to South Africa?

Speaker Baleka Mbete: It is important for us to feel that we can welcome the world's parliaments to our country, especially since we are new in the IPU. We are only 13 years old because democracy itself is only 13 years old in our country. It is also a gesture that shows how much we appreciate the support we got from the whole world when we were still fighting for democracy, for our freedom. Here we are, part of the world community.

Q: You are expecting a high number of legislators and personalities in Cape Town. Should we also expect a message from former President Nelson Mandela?

B.M.: This is something we are working on. We realize that it will

be important for the citizens of the world. As you know, we regard him not only as ours, but as belonging to the whole world.

Q: What are the main challenges facing South Africa today?

B.M.: They are related to eradicating poverty and making sure that we can effectively deal with socio-economic imbalances in our society, which are not easy to address overnight.

We are pleased that the world, through the Millennium Development Goals, has focused its attention on these matters that coincide with our own policy priorities and that the focus of the world's parliaments is to ensure that the backlog that we have been facing can be dealt with as quickly as possible.

Q: South Africa is an example of reconciliation. How do you see it today?

B.M.: We tackled it at two levels: at a symbolic level where publicly we put in place a procedure and mechanisms, and we tackled it in front of the people in a manner that showed South Africans that it is possible to

“We can still collectively take responsibility to symbolically lead our people to a different future.”

talk to people who come from a community we had always thought were enemies to us. If as leaders we can agree on political

prospects even though we come from different parties, we can still collectively take responsibility to symbolically lead our people to a different future where we talk about different values, different principles that guide how we govern the affairs of the country. But some of those things are easier said than done in daily life.

Q: Can you give us examples?

B.M.: When you go to a bank or a hospital, where you expect services from one member of society or another, many times, you still see that it will take much longer for our mindsets to change. We have an ongoing challenge to change the way of thinking, the way of doing things. For us, as South Africans, on a daily basis, we have to come into the new era, into democracy and we have to realize that some of these ways of doing things and the attitude that sometimes are expressed belong to the past and that there is no place for them in the present. We deal with them with the insti-

Photo: AFP/A. Zieminski



South African Parliament in session.

tutions we have established as part of our new democracy.

Q: South African women are very active. How do you explain that they are seen as role models?

B.M.: Many women were involved in the struggle for liberation. It is not only in the new South Africa and the democratic process that the issues of gender are coming up. We refused, during the struggle, to believe that the country only had to deal first with the question of political emancipation and then to start looking at gender emancipation. Women were victims targeted by oppression in specific ways that are unique to the social arrangements in term of the political power in every society. This had to be integrated into our strategy to emancipate the whole society. It is part of the issue of how you liberate the whole country. It is a matter not just for women. It was a matter of policy, of commitment, of both women and men. Those of us who were given mandates to go to parliament, the party - the ANC - adopted a conscious policy position that not less that a certain percentage of members had to be women. And from them on, society saw that women are capable. After that it became a matter of routine. We do it because now we have the confidence we need.

Q: Is there a law that you are proud to be associated with?

B.M.: There is a policy in parliament which stipulates that no delegation that goes out is composed of men only. Therefore I would never give permission for a delegation of men only or a delegation of women only. We sent the message that the question of gender is a sensitive matter which we must all make a conscious effort to improve.

A glimpse of Madiba

The image is still in our minds...it was February 1990. Television screens across the world were going to show the first pictures of the man who was considered to be the oldest political prisoner in the world. Finally he came out - a willowy figure with a radiant smile - and walked straight to his freedom, regained after 28 years behind bars. Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela - also known as Madiba - could start writing a new page in the history of South Africa as a free man. He could also prove that multi-ethnic cohabitation was indeed possible in his country.

The man who inspired Sting to sing his most "engaged" song, the man to whom Mike Tyson sent the boxing gloves he wore when he became world champion, the banished man who inspired Chilean caricaturist Pepe Palomo's most moving cartoon, had become, through universal suffrage, the President of post-apartheid South Africa. He would become a legend and drive forward a reconciliation process considered unthinkable until then. Historic events indeed...much like in 1993, when the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Nelson Mandela and former Afrikaner President Frederik Willem de Klerk for their political will and courage. That was yesteryear. Today, hundreds of members of parliament and delegates from around the world are preparing to attend the 118th IPU Assembly in Cape Town to better grasp - among other subject items on the agenda - the experience that was South African reconciliation. They are also secretly hoping to catch a glimpse of the man who will remain for all of posterity "the father of the rainbow nation" on the podium or via video cast. For in the words of the Speaker of the South African National Assembly, Ms. Baleka Mbete, "we regard him not only as ours, but as belonging to the whole world".

L.B.



Drawing by Pepe Palomo.



Photo: IPU/L. Ballin

IPU posters on Myanmar at the *international film festival and forum on human rights*

On the evening dedicated to Burma entitled "Justice for Burma" two posters from the IPU exhibition on the human rights situation in Myanmar were presented at the Geneva-based International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights (FIFDH), held in March 2008. The posters were part of the exhibition prepared by the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and on display at the IPU Assemblies in Bali and Geneva in 2007.

Reconciliation and the administration of justice: The Role and Responsibility of Parliaments

By *Richard J. Goldstone*

Photo: IPU/H. Salgado



Former Justice
Richard J.
Goldstone

has played a major role in his native South Africa and at the international level. He served as a justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa, which was entrusted with interpreting the new South African Constitution and supervising the country's transition to democracy. Previously, he served as Chairperson of the Standing Commission of Inquiry Regarding Public Violence and Intimidation, which was subsequently known as the Goldstone Commission. He was also a member of the international panel established in August 1997 by the Government of Argentina to monitor the inquiry into Nazi activity in the Republic since 1938. From 1994 to 1996, Goldstone served as the Chief Prosecutor of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda.

The need for reconciliation follows periods in the life of a nation attempting to recover from a history of severe and systematic human rights violations. One thinks in this context of States such as those of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and South Africa. In each of these countries, one finds markedly different approaches to reconciliation.

In the case of the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, the facts relating to carefully planned genocides, crimes against humanity and "ethnic cleansing" have been meticulously and painstakingly established by the United Nations ad hoc criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda (ICTY and the ICTR). In South Africa, the truth was laid bare by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the few criminal prosecutions that followed the end of apartheid.

The investigations of the ICTY ended the fabricated and false denials that came from officials of the Bosnian Serb Army that a massacre of innocent Muslim men and boys had been perpetrated during 1995 in Srebrenica. That genocide committed there was more recently confirmed by the International Court of Justice in The Hague. The ICTR has conclusively shown that the hundreds of thousands of killings that took place in the middle of 1994 were the consequence of a carefully planned and efficiently executed genocide. In South Africa, the TRC effectively put an end to the official denials that, not unusually, accompanied the violations during the apartheid era.

In all three situations, the recording of the truth is an essential foundation for reconciliation. The sordid past has to be brought into the open. The victims of such violence and criminality justifiably demand an official and credible ack-

nowledgement of what they suffered. It is that acknowledgement that makes it possible for those victims to accept a new society in partnership with the perpetrators and their supporters.

It is parliaments that must ensure that means are given to the victims to reclaim and restore the human dignity of which they were robbed. The necessary legislation may require sacrifices from the former regime and those who principally benefited from an evil system.

“It is parliaments that must ensure that means are given to the victims to reclaim and restore the human dignity of which they were robbed.”

This makes it essential for parliaments to ensure that appropriate programmes are introduced to achieve effective remedies. To that end, for example, the South African Bill of Rights provides that: "To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures

designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken."

If those measures are to encourage the achievement of reconciliation, the remedial measures must be carefully designed and calibrated and must in no way be, or be perceived as being, arbitrary or unjust. In other words, the laws must be constitutional and thus fair and proportionate. Adherence to the rule of law is essential if all citizens are to buy into the new society and if the victims are able to have their dignity restored.

Parliaments have a crucial and often daunting task to play. While the courts must ensure that the laws are appropriately designed and applied, it is parliaments, representing the will of the people, that are uniquely placed to make reconciliation possible. Reconciliation is the oil that enables the legislative engine to work and the rule of law to flourish.

The complex case of Sierra Leone

In one of his speeches, Reverend Jesse Jackson said that "our dreams must be stronger than our memories...We must be pulled by our dreams, rather than pushed by our memories". In many post-conflict countries, the killing may have stopped but incompatible historical memories persist. On the one hand, perpetrators deny the carnage and on the other, victims insist on the truth being told. These conflicting memories often leave vast rifts between post-conflict peoples and without doubt slow down any reconciliation process. The case of Sierra Leone is even more complex.

In this country, the perpetrator-victim dichotomy is complicated by the fact that many of the perpetrators - child soldiers - were also victims. True reconciliation can only begin to be achieved when there is genuine consensus on the past - what really happened, the present - what are we doing about it, and the future - where we are going.

Of all State institutions, the national parliament is the very embodiment of civil

society and a representative and effective parliament is vital to the success of any transition from conflict to peace and even more so to the ambition of living up to the overwhelming challenge of reconciliation. Parliament's representational function is key to establishing consensus and subsequently reconciliation.

One of parliament's primary roles is to represent and convey the will of the people at the State level. Made up of men and women who are elected by and are in direct contact with the people, parliament is the natural institution *par excellence* to act and speak for the common interests of all segments of society. Members of parliament are well placed to raise awareness of all relevant issues, to promote public discussion and to ensure that they are placed on the national agenda. Action by the parliament and its members is crucial not only for implementing sustainable policies and programmes, but also for relaying and explaining to the public the issues involved, thereby forging popular support and consensus for action.

Circumvention of this vital function of parliament, particularly so in conflict/post-conflict countries, is done at the peril of a return to violence. One can argue therefore that the collapse of the 1996 Abidjan Peace Accord was due in part to the absence of the Sierra Leone Parliament's involvement in negotiating it and above all, in implementing it. The inevitable happened: the country slipped back into brutal violence.

The Parliament is among a number of post-conflict African parliaments the IPU has identified as beneficiaries of a two-year project intended to build capacity to establish, monitor, assess and provide follow-up on the work of transitional justice mechanisms, such as truth and reconciliation commissions, and to strengthen inclusive political processes. The Parliament will host a regional seminar on those topics in June 2008. In addition, the IPU, in cooperation with other partners, including the United Nations, is designing a far-reaching programme of assistance for the Parliament.

Photo AFP/J. Sanogo



Voters waiting to cast their vote at the 2007 presidential election.

IPU President in the Middle East

Photo: Knesset



IPU President with the Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, Ms. Dalia Itzik, and the head of the Israeli delegation at IPU Assemblies, Mr. Silvan Shalom, a former Foreign Minister.

President Casini made an official mission to the Middle East at the end of January, coinciding with a freak snowstorm that brought much of the region to a standstill.

The mission offered a unique opportunity for the President to hold talks with Israeli and Palestinian political leaders and senior officials and to explore with them ways in which the IPU can be helpful at

the parliamentary level in bridging the gap between the two sides to the conflict.

On January 28, the day after the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, he delivered a speech in the Knesset to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day. During his stay in Jerusalem he held talks with the Speaker of the Parliament, Ms. Dalia Itzik, and leaders of the political factions, before meeting President Perez, Prime Minister Olmert and Foreign Minister Livni. The talks centered on the political situation in the region and prospects for peace, the crisis in Gaza, and codes and standards for parliamentary elections.

Wishing to learn at first hand about the difficulties facing the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Mr. Casini went to the PLC headquarters in Ramallah, where he held a lively exchange of views with a group of parliamentarians.

The IPU Secretary General joined the President during his visit to Jerusalem and Ramallah after making a stop in Amman, where he met with the Speaker and other members of the Palestine National Council for discussions about their membership status in the IPU. In the subsequent talks with the Israeli officials, Mr. Johnsonson raised the question of the PLC parliamentarians who were detained in Israeli jails. He also held several meetings in Ramallah with the PLC members and the Secretary General of the parliament.

Photo: Office of the Palestinian Prime Minister



IPU President Pier Ferdinando Casini met with Palestinian Prime Minister, Mr. Salam Fayyad.

IPU "Friend of the Alliance of Civilizations"

Reconciliation can take many forms, and the IPU has been involved in addressing the perceived divide between East and West as part of a new United Nations initiative known as the Alliance of Civilisations (AoC).

The first Forum of the AoC was held in Madrid on 15 and 16 January 2008. Its aim is to find ways to bring the voices of moderation to the "clash of civilisations" debate, and to offer a counterweight to extremist thinking. Spearheading this venture are the Prime Ministers of Spain and Turkey, Messrs Zapatero and Erdogan. The IPU became a "Friend of the Alliance" at the end of last year, not least thanks to the attention drawn by the Bali Assembly resolution on *Ensuring respect for and peaceful co-existence between all religious communities and beliefs in a globalized world, and is currently discussing a memorandum of understanding with the AoC Secretariat.*

The meeting brought together leaders from religious groups, cultural foundations and institutes, authors and statesmen. The session at which the IPU spoke was about building bridges between international organisations to further the aims of the Alliance, under the title "Consolidating International Partnerships". The discussion focussed on youth and education in particular. Since 9/11 cross-cultural exchanges between the West and Arab states have declined dramatically, and the purpose was to suggest educational and cultural dissemination initiatives that might begin to reverse the trend.

The following day saw the launch of two media-related initiatives: the "Rapid Response Media Mechanism", which the moderator preferred to call "Cool Heads for Hot Topics" and which aims to establish a data base of press contacts who could make informed conciliatory statements at short notice in the event of a cross-cultural flare-up like the "cartoons crisis". The other was the launch of the AoC Clearinghouse beginning with a theme of Media Literacy Education, which will catalogue media literacy programs and related government policies in different parts of the world.

IPU human rights mission to Sri Lanka

On 6 March 2008, Mr. K. Sivanesan, a Member of the Parliament of Sri Lanka belonging to the opposition Tamil National Alliance was killed together with his driver by a roadside bomb shortly after they had crossed into the Vanni region. This killing took place less than two weeks after a delegation of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, led by Canadian Senator Sharon Carstairs visited Colombo from 21 to 24 February. The delegation, invited by the Parliament of Sri Lanka, was also received by the Head of State, President Rajapakse. It gathered on-site information on cases from the competent parliamentary, governmental, administrative and judicial authorities, the parliamentarians in question themselves and other concerned parties. The mission enjoyed the cooperation of the authorities and was able to fully discharge its mandate. The

report of the mission will be made public on the occasion of the 119th IPU Assembly in October 2008.

Unfortunately, since the delegation's departure, the string of assassinations of parliamentarians continues, the most recent being the killing of Mr. Sivanesan. In the past three years, an ever increasing number of cases concerning alleged violations of the right to life and security of members of the Parliament of Sri Lanka have been brought to the attention of the Committee.

Between December 2005 and January 2008, four members of parliament - three of whom belonged to the opposition - were gunned down and a number of others received death threats or were the target of assassination attempts. In none of those cases have the authorities so far succeeded in identifying the perpetrators and bringing them to justice.

IPU condemns the assassination of members of parliament

The IPU is appalled at the killing of members of parliament in recent months. In March 2008, Mr. K. Sivanesan, a parliamentarian belonging to the Tamil National Alliance (TNA), and his driver were killed by a roadside bomb shortly after they had crossed into the Vanni region in Sri Lanka. In January 2008, Mr. T. Maheswaran, an opposition legislator, was shot dead and Mr. Dassanayke, an MP and a member of Cabinet, was killed a few days later by a roadside bomb. In December 2005 and November 2006, Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham and Mr. Nadiraj Ravirja respectively, both belonging to the TNA, were shot dead.

In Kenya, Mr. David Too of the Orange Democratic Movement was shot dead by a policeman in February 2008, following the killing a few days earlier of Mr. Mugabe Ware, amid a wave of violence triggered by the disputed presidential elections.

In November 2007, Mr. Wahab Akbar, a member of the Philippine House of Representatives, was killed when a powerful bomb hit part of the Philippine House of Representatives killing him and his driver. The same month, a suicide attack took the lives of more than 40 people in Afghanistan, including six members of the parliament and several children. In September 2007, Mr. Antoine Ghanem, a member of the Lebanese Parliament, died as a car bomb exploded in Beirut, along with several other persons. He was the fourth Lebanese legislator to have been murdered in less than two years.

Photo: Parliament of Sri Lanka



The IPU delegation received by the President of Sri Lanka, Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse.



IPU exhibition at the Palais des Nations in Geneva

IPU Secretary General, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, inaugurated on 4 March an exhibition entitled "Women in Politics" at the Palais des Nations. The exhibition, divided into several panels, evokes issues such as the main hurdles women encounter in accessing parliament, parliaments with the highest and lowest numbers of women MPs, figures for women Speakers of Parliament, the democratic approach from the gender equality perspective, and women at IPU. The exhibition was set up in the passageway between the old and new buildings of UNOG. Copies of the new Map of Women in Politics: 2008 - a joint IPU-UN project - with statistics on women in parliament and government throughout the world at 1 January 2008, were made available to the public.

Women in parliament: not enough progress

"At this rate, we will not achieve parity in parliament before 2050", said IPU Secretary General, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, presenting the statistics of women in parliaments and in governments to the press in New York and in Geneva, on 29 February and 4 March 2008. As of 1 January 2008, of all the legislators in parliament around the world, 17.7 per cent were women, an all-time high, but still very slow progress.

Following renewals in 63 countries (78 chambers of parliament) during 2007, increases in the number of women were registered in 58 per cent of the cases, with women winning 16.9 per cent of all parliamentary seats up for grabs in 2007. Of the women who won seats, 1,764 were directly elected, 116 were indirectly elected, and 133 were appointed.

In 20 per cent of the chambers renewed, women's representation remained the same as in the previous legislature. Worse still, in 22 per cent of the chambers renewed, fewer women members gained seats.

More parliaments exceeding the 30% critical mass

Women gained 30 per cent or more of the seats up for renewal in 13 chambers. Interestingly, four parliaments can boast today more than 40 per cent women membership. Joining Rwanda and Sweden, who have been in the lead for several years now, Argentina elected 40 per cent of women in its Lower House and Finland increased its

numbers, reaching 41.2 per cent of women. Upper Houses have also made significant progress. In the Senate of the Bahamas, women hold 60 per cent of the seats – the highest number ever reached in a parliamentary chamber.

The Americas and Nordic countries continue to climb

The Americas registered some impressive gains for women during 2007: an average of 28 per cent of the seats renewed in the 10 chambers went to women, boosting the regional average of women parliamentarians to over 20 per cent. This is owing to important gains in Trinidad and Tobago, Argentina, Bahamas and Guatemala.

The Nordic countries continued to elect the highest number of women to their parliaments. Their regional average increased to 41.4 per cent after Denmark, Finland and Iceland elected significant numbers of women to their parliaments. The Pacific Island States had the lowest return rate of women to parliament in 2007, at 1.8 per cent. No women were elected in the Federated States of Micronesia and in Nauru.

The most progress in 2007 was made by Kyrgyzstan, which went from no women in parliament to 25.6 per cent further to elections held in 2007. This was owing to the introduction of a proportional representation system, with political parties required to present at least 30 per cent of women candidates.

Women Heads of State and heads of Parliament

Women remain a minority in the highest positions of the State. Of the 150 Heads of State at the start of 2008, only seven or 4.7 per cent were women. For heads of government, the proportion is lower still, at 4.2 per cent, accounting for eight women among the world's 192 heads of government. For women Speakers of Parliament, the total stands at roughly 10 per cent - 28 women Speakers of Parliament, almost half of which come from Latin American and Caribbean parliaments.



Photo: IPU/K. Jabre

IPU-UN Map of Women in Politics 2008.

In the press

More women entering politics

Organizations that encourage gender equality in politics say there is an emerging worldwide trend toward women's civic engagement. To mark International Women's Day tomorrow, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Congressional Human Rights Caucus held a joint forum Wednesday to review the political landscape women shared in 2007. Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of IPU, a Switzerland-based organization that works closely with the United Nations and looks into worldwide parliamentary issues, said the ongoing presidential election in the United States is encouraging to him when he thinks about future female involvement in politics. "Everybody in the world is watching this election, and people are inspired by it," Mr. Johnsson said, pointing out Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, New York Democrat, as a strong female candidate seeking power at the top.

**The Washington Times -
7 March 2008**

Women in the Executive

For women in the executive, at the global level, 16.1 per cent of all ministerial portfolios were held by women, an overall increase of two percentage points on the proportion for 2005. These findings are based on the Map of Women in Politics: 2008 produced by IPU and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.

The number of countries with no women ministers has declined from 19 to 13. The under-representation of women in positions of government is featuring more frequently as a key political issue. Unlike in some parliaments, where different measures exist to secure seats for women legislators, in the executive branch of government it is often sheer political will that matters.

Two countries have surpassed the 50 per cent mark for women in ministerial positions: Finland with 58 per cent and Norway with 55.6 women ministers. Grenada comes in third place with 50 per cent. The three front runners are closely tailed by Sweden, France, South Africa, and Spain – countries in which the leadership has voiced a strong political commitment to gender equality. Twenty-two countries have over 30 per cent of women in cabinet posts: 12 of these countries are in Europe and six in the Latin America and Caribbean region. In 2005, only 17 countries - mostly in Europe - topped the 30 per cent mark. At the bottom end of the scale, 13 countries have no women at all heading ministries, and eight have a proportion of less than 5 per cent.

The regional picture for women ministers shows progress for the Americas and the Nordic States since 2005. The Americas have pushed their average up from 17 to 23 per cent, and the Nordics also boast a five percentage point increase, from 42.5 to 47.5 per cent. This trend, with the Nordic States and the Americas in the lead, mirrors the pattern in parliaments. Meanwhile, the Arab States have seen a one percentage point increase to 8 per cent, and Asia remains stagnant, also around the 8 per cent mark.

Most ministerial portfolios held by women are related to social affairs, family, children, youth and women's affairs. Next on the list come education and the environment. On a positive note, this year there are more women heading ministries for trade, employment, foreign affairs, and justice. Defence remains securely at the bottom, with only six out of the 1,022 defence portfolios held by women worldwide.

Promoting women's access to work

Women account for close to 40 per cent of the work force in the world, yet they are always disadvantaged at work, with their activities either unpaid or underpaid compared with that of their male colleagues.

With a view to addressing the issues linked to equal pay and discrimination or exploitation in the workplace, the IPU and the International Labour Organization (ILO) organized in December 2007 at the ILO headquarters in Geneva, a Conference on *Women and Work*, in which Ms. Nouzha Skalli, Minister for Social Development, Families and Solidarity of Morocco and some 150 members of parliament from 55 pays participated.

In the words of IPU President, Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini, promoting women's access to the labour market and strengthening their economic contribution are not only key factors of development and for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but also a matter of justice.

The Conference participants concluded that to secure and promote equality for women in the workplace, we must begin with a strong and effective legal framework. Developing gender-sensitive legislation is the basic foundation for which we - as parliamentarians - have responsibility. National legislation must meet the international standards and benchmarks to which our countries are committed. It must also address national realities and serve the interests of all our constituents, including rural women and marginalized women.

The development of micro credits is very important

The Moroccan Minister for Social Development, Families and Solidarity, Ms. Nouzha Skalli, explained to the *World of Parliaments* the status of women in the workplace in Morocco. **Interview.**

Q: It would seem that just about everywhere in the world, employment is falling, particularly among young women with a string of qualifications who often can only find dangerous jobs or are hired as consultants. How do you explain that?

Nouzha Skalli: Indeed, as far as the active labour force is concerned,

globally there is a slight downward trend. Because women work a lot in the informal sector, they are faced with two problems: the dangerous nature of their job and the lack of social security. How can we address this problem? In our country, the development of micro credits is very important as Morocco is becoming a leading country in the area of micro

Members of United States Congress participate in launch of Map of Women in Politics 2008

At an event organized by the IPU in Washington on 5 March, in conjunction with the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, five members of Congress took to the podium to raise awareness of the issue and help launch the Map to the American public.

The members were: Lois Capps, Jan Schakowsky, Diane Watson, Christopher Shays, and Donald Payne, and one of the points raised during the discussion was about the need for parliaments to constitute bipartisan caucuses devoted to women's issues. For example, the Congressional Women's Caucus, of which Ms. Capps is co-Chair, has proved to be an effective organizing tool and a forum for a broad range of women's issues to be discussed in the open.

However, change also needs to occur at the grass-roots levels. As Ms. Schakowsky noted, a recent study compared a group of women to an equally qualified (in terms of skills, age, and other criteria) group of men, and asked how prepared they felt to run for office. It turned out that for every male respondent who said he did not feel up to the job, there were two women who felt the same way.

The disparity between men and women parliamentarians originates deep down then, at the level of self-perception and self-confidence, and will require more education and pro-active training of women to enable them to find their voice as community leaders and would-be politicians. In developing countries these solutions are even more difficult to apply of course because of scarce resources. That will require more foreign aid to be spent on women's issues.

Other panellists were Ms. Marie Wilson, President of The White House Project, a US-based organization, and Mr. Anders Johnsson, IPU Secretary General.

credits. Within my ministry, we have set up programmes to help develop income-generating activities for women and cooperatives in order to enable women to participate in the country's development.

Q: What is the situation regarding child labour?

N.S.: In Morocco today, there is very strong political will to combat child labour. Regarding legislation, the Labour Code prohibits child labour for children under 15 years of age and applies very strict rules on working conditions and quality of work to working children aged between 15 and 18. The work carried out by children in this age bracket should become more aligned with an apprenticeship or internship.

Q: And what is your view on the so-called "child maids"?

N.S.: Our Ministry has put in place an assistance programme and civil society is also conducting activities to address the problem of school drop outs and child labour. We are preparing specific legislation to combat child labour, with tougher sanctions, in particular with regard to middle men. A year ago, we launched a huge awareness-raising campaign about the work carried out by little girls. We keep a register of the little girls who are working and we try to reunite them with their families. We also try to provide the families with social assistance, by giving them foodstuffs, for example, to encourage them to send their girls to school.

Q: How do the families react?

N.S.: The families take the girls back in and register them at school, but they insist that they send their girls to work because they need the money. That is why we endeavour to develop an income-generating activity for one member of the family – often the mother – and we provide assistance in terms of school needs for the children.



Photo: IPU/H.Salgado

Moroccan Minister Ms. Nouzha Skalli (left), taking the floor at the Conference on Women and Work.

In the press

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY: More women in parliament

Women's participation in parliaments throughout the world is growing slowly but surely and this trend is already influencing the work programmes of these legislative bodies, said the Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Anders B. Johnsson. The effects of this increase of two percentage points over three years are visible in the legislative agendas that have become imbued with gender issues, Johnsson told IPS. For instance, the problem of violence against women is already on the agenda of parliaments, something which was rarely the case before, added the head of the organization founded in 1889 which currently brings together 146 affiliated parliaments. These problems are being taken seriously, with laws being passed and programmes being adopted to protect women and children. A great many changes are taking place on the national agendas of States for the good of society due to higher numbers of women in parliament, the IPU Secretary General concluded.

Inter Press Service (IPS) – 4 March 2008

One in five MPs worldwide female

Nearly one in five parliamentarians worldwide is now a woman, a survey showed – but far fewer are making it to the top government posts. The analysis by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva looked at 78 chambers of parliament across 63 countries, and found an all-time high of 17.7 percent female representation. It put that down to increasing use of quotas worldwide, but pointed out that women were still finding it hard to break through into the executive branches of government. "Quotas of temporary special measures remain key. In those countries that used some type of electoral quota, the average representation of women was 19.3 percent, as opposed to 14.7 percent for those countries without quotas," said the IPU in a statement. However, such measures are inadequate to access higher positions. "Unlike in some parliaments, where different measures exist to secure seats for women legislators, in the executive branch of government it is often sheer political will that matters", said the IPU. The record 17.7 percent figure compares with just 11.3 per cent in 1995...However, overall, women are making a slow advance in executive positions, holding 16.1 per cent of ministerial portfolios, up just 2 per cent from 2005.

Agence France Presse (AFP) – 5 March 2008

Parliaments tackle poverty

Charles Darwin said it a long time ago: "If the misery of the poor be caused not by the laws of nature, but by our institutions, great is our sin". Today, there is an ever-growing gap in the rich-poor divide and while new technologies help boost economic growth and progress in some countries, the sober reality is that developing nations are still lagging far behind. No more so is this the case than in the fifty so-called least developed countries (LDCs).

These countries represent the poorest and weakest segments of society on earth. Acute poverty, weak economies and little capacity for growth hamper the efforts of these countries to improve the quality of life of their people and this is why the IPU and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked

“LDC parliaments are seen as weak ‘rubberstamp’ institutions.”

Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) held a meeting in Bagamoyo (United Republic of Tanzania), last December. The event considered solutions that would promote parliamentary input into the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action (BPOA), adopted at the 3rd UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in 2001 and which outlines a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy tailored to the special needs of the LDCs.

Hosted by the Parliament of the United Republic of Tanzania, and chaired by the Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Samuel Sitta, the event brought together a group of seven out of 10 pilot parliaments identified by the IPU and the UN-OHRLLS. Participants resolved to encourage their parliaments to be more proactive in fostering implementation of the BPOA,

making maximum use of existing mechanisms within their parliaments. They also highlighted, among other things, the need for parliaments to be proactive in overseeing development assistance and in so doing making sure it corresponds to the real needs of society and does not reflect solely the perceived priorities of donors.

The overarching goal of the Brussels Programme is to make substantial progress towards halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger by 2015 and promote the sustainable development of the LDCs. It is designed as a framework of partnership between LDCs and their development partners based on mutual commitments. It includes 30 internationally agreed development goals encompassing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Good governance at the national and international levels is a major area of focus in the BPOA.

LDC parliaments are seen as weak ‘rubberstamp’ institutions. All too often parliamentarians are not informed of the work done by the State bodies entrusted with the implementation of commitments such as the Brussels Programme of Action. They far too often rely on the executive for policy advice due to their own lack of capacity to gather information, research and analyse government policies. Failure to represent many segments of society, particularly vulnerable groups such as women, children and minorities, is a further weakness of LDC parliaments.

As a follow-up to the meeting the IPU and the UN-OHRLLS are implementing a project that will ultimately stimulate more active involvement of all 50 LDC parliaments in the implementation of the BPOA. Capacity building for parliaments to establish, monitor, assess, and provide follow-up to this instrument is a key component of that project.

Photo: National Assembly of Tanzania



Mr. Samuel J. Sitta, Speaker of the National Assembly of the United Republic of Tanzania and Ms. Anne Makinda, Deputy Speaker.

IPU helps to boost parliamentary staff capacity in Cambodia

Cambodia's parliament is a fledgling institution and like any institution at this stage of development, it is facing teething problems. Chief among these is the lack of qualified manpower to deliver adequate and quality service to members. The IPU considers staff as the backbone of a parliament worthy of the name. It therefore responded swiftly to a request from the Cambodian Parliament to assist in training key staff of both Houses of Parliament. For this purpose, the IPU organized in December 2007 a three-week training programme for some 16 legislative research staff in Phnom Penh. The programme focused on developing skills in providing information, legislative services, and legal analysis of draft laws, including records of committee proceedings and amendment of legislation. The training, led by Ronda Miller and Ronnie Mees, senior staff of the New South Wales (Australia) and Belgian parliaments, also examined ways in which citizens can be involved in the law-making process.

Donors visit the House of Parliaments

A meeting with a group of donor governments interested in providing support to the IPU took place at *The House of Parliaments* on 13 March. Their aim was to familiarize themselves with the IPU and discuss future cooperation and support. The meeting is part of efforts geared towards mobilizing resources for securing additional voluntary funds for IPU activities. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) already contributed CAD\$

IPU and UN launch World e-Parliament Report 2008

The first World e-Parliament Report 2008 was launched in February at the United Nations in New York. The publication is timely. Anders Johnsson, IPU Secretary General, reported that only ten per cent of 105 parliamentary chambers recently surveyed were making extensive use of ICT. "Much more needs to be done" he said "to boost the use of modern communication technologies in parliament". The IPU has partnered with UNDESA in producing the report. Speaking alongside Sha Zukang, United Nations Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, and Gertrude Mongella, President of the Pan-African Parliament, Mr. Johnsson said that ICT was a key tool for making parliaments more transparent, more accessible to the public, and thus more democratic.

After the launch, a high-level dialogue was held on the Right of Access to Information. Participants included Katalin Szili, Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary, Mechtilde Rothe, Vice-President of the European Parliament, and Geoff Q. Doidge, House Chairperson of the National Assembly of South Africa. The launch of the report coincided with the second high-level meeting of the Board of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament.

IPU website user survey 2008

The IPU website is undergoing a major redesigning process. As part of this process, we want to learn a little more about the current users of our website. Visit our on-line survey at www.ipu.org - The survey should take about 1 minute to complete. Thank you.

Developments to the PARLINE database on national parliaments: IPU's PARLINE database (www.ipu.org/parline) now has new features, including dynamically generated graphics and data-export functions. The database contains records for all 265 parliamentary chambers in the world, where you can find general information (names of Speakers and Secretary Generals, contacts for parliaments, etc.), results of recent parliamentary elections and much more. The new features include: Parliaments at a glance aggregates data globally or by region. Each dataset (structure, seats, term, presidents, and electoral systems) can be visualized in a graph or exported in Excel and CSV.

The Toolbox offers two possibilities: 1) Export parliamentary mailing lists from PARLINE and 2) Export data and statistics from selected database fields. New in PARLINE displays recent updates to the General information module of PARLINE.

The Recent elections page provides direct access to the latest reports. You will find a background text, results, statistics on the distribution of votes and seats among political parties, as well as a breakdown of seats by sex and, when available, by the age and profession of members of parliament. Quick access to PARLINE: www.ipu.org/parline. Send your feedback and suggestions for future developments to postbox@mail.ipu.org.

669,999 (CHF 782,000 at the time of the pledge) in 2007 for activities to help parliaments in post-conflict countries play their role in reconciliation efforts. Negotiations with CIDA about funding for a broader range of activities are likely to come to a fruitful conclusion in the near future.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) has provided stable and predictable funds amounting to CHF 1.6 million during the 2005-2007

period and will take a decision in March 2008 about continued funding for 2008-2010 under a similar arrangement.

Irish Aid is committed to cooperating with the IPU and negotiations during 2007 resulted in a decision in February 2008 by the Minister of State for Overseas Development to fund IPU's programme on Gender Equality in Politics with € 1.1 million (CHF 1.78 million at the time of the pledge) over three years.

Bhutan

A Royal Decree of 30 June 2007 declared that elections to the newly-established National Council, the Upper Chamber of the bicameral parliament, would be held in December. They were held on 31 December 2007 and 29 January 2008. The National Council is a non-partisan body comprising 20 directly-elected members and five royal nominees. The first nationwide elections to the new 47-member National Assembly took place on 2 March 2008. A draft constitution unveiled in 2004 will come into force once it is adopted by the National Assembly.

Ecuador

On 29 November 2007, the 130-member Constituent Assembly held its first session and voted to "assume the legislative powers and duties" of the Congress until such time as a new constitution is adopted. It declared that the Congress would be in recess without pay until a new constitution is approved by a national referendum. The Congress rejected the move, claiming that the Constituent Assembly is not vested with the power to take such a decision. On 30 November, President Correa tendered his resignation to the Constituent Assembly. On the same day, the Constituent Assembly voted to confirm Mr. Correa as the country's president. A draft constitution is expected to be ready by 24 May 2008, after which it will be submitted to a referendum. Parliamentary elections are expected to follow.

Iraq

On 12 January 2008, the Council of Representatives of Iraq passed the Accountability and Justice Law, allowing low-ranking members of the dissolved Ba'ath Party to resume their posts in government and public institutions. It was approved by all attending 143 members of the 275-member parliament. An estimated 2.5 million Iraqis, mainly from the

Sunni minority, had been Ba'ath party members before it was banned and dissolved in 2003. On 4 February, the Presidency Council comprising the President and two Vice-Presidents ratified the law, despite concerns that it would force many people who were hired after 2003 out of those posts. It added that it would propose amendments to the law, which would subsequently be submitted to the parliament. No timeline has been specified for completion of the process.

Myanmar

On 9 February 2008, the military government announced that it would hold a constitutional referendum in May 2008 and a general election in 2010. It argued that the country should "change from a military government to a democratic civilian administration" based on the "multiparty democratic system" in accordance with the basic constitutional principles agreed by the National Convention in September 2007 (see issue No. 28, December 2007). Since December 2007, a 54-member State Constitution Drafting Commission has been working on a draft constitution. The Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), a pro-government organ, which held 633 seats (58 per cent) in the National Convention, will be tasked with organizing the referendum and the elections.

Nepal

On 23 December 2007, leaders of the seven main political parties signed a 23-point understanding, which was adopted by the Cabinet on the following day, paving the way for the elections to the 601-member Constituent Assembly (instead of the 425 originally foreseen; see issue No. 25, April 2007) under a mixed electoral system. A total of 335 members will be elected through the proportional system while 240 others will be chosen through the first-past-the-post system. The remaining 26 members

will be nominated by the Prime Minister from minority groups who do not win representation in the elections. Elections to the Constituent Assembly, which have been postponed twice, are due to take place on 10 April 2008. On 29 December, the interim Legislative Parliament adopted a third amendment to the interim constitution, declaring Nepal a federal democratic republic. The decision will come into force once it is endorsed at the first sitting of the Constituent Assembly.

Romania

A national referendum on electoral reform took place on 25 November, concurrently with elections for the European Parliament. The reform proposed that voters cast their ballots directly for candidates instead of party lists. President Basescu argued that the new system would strengthen the voters' relationship with their elected representatives. Although over 89 per cent of voters supported the new electoral system, the results of the referendum were invalidated due to the low turnout (26 per cent), well below the required 50 per cent.

Venezuela

In August 2007, President Hugo Chávez proposed 33 amendments to the 1999 Constitution. The changes included removing limits on the number of presidential terms, extending the presidential term from six to seven years and lowering the voting age from 18 to 16. He insisted that these changes were necessary to pursue his socialist revolution. On 2 November, the National Assembly added another 36 amendments to the 33 initial proposals, which were subsequently put to a constitutional referendum in a single package. On 2 December, the amendments were narrowly rejected, with 51 per cent "no" votes.

The IPU has lost several of its outstanding supporters over the past months. The world organization of parliaments wishes to pay tribute to their commitment and dedication.

Photo: French National Assembly



MR. RAYMOND FORNI
Former Speaker of the French
National Assembly

Mr. Raymond Forni granted us an interview which was published in the very first issue of *The World of Parliaments* in April 2001. Holder of the fourth highest office of the State, he was elected Speaker of the National Assembly in March 2000 and remained in that post until June 2002. He died on 5 January 2008, losing a brave battle with devastating leukaemia.

Mr. Forni was 66 years old. His most beautiful memory as a member of parliament was when the death penalty was abolished, a law for which he served as rapporteur. In 2002, he participated in the Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Marrakech, organizing on that occasion a meeting between the then Speaker of the Knesset, Mr. Avraham Burg, and the Deputy Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Mr. Ibrahim Abu Al-Naja, along with other Speakers of Parliament in attendance.

MR. SHAYKH ABDULLAH BIN HUSAYN AL-AHMAR
Speaker of the Parliament of Yemen

Speaker Al-Ahmar died on 29 December 2007 at the age of 74 after suffering many years from an acute illness.

MR. AMBROISE EDOUARD NOUMAZALAY
President of the Senate, Republic of Congo

Mr. Ambroise Edouard Noumazalay died on 17 November 2007 in Paris (France), where he had been hospitalized owing to poor health.

MR. TOM LANTOS
Member of the United States Congress

The IPU had the privilege of working with Mr. Lantos over the past years in his capacity as Chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Minority Leader and subsequently Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He was a true internationalist, who believed in the value of dialogue, cooperation and engagement. Congressman Tom Lantos passed away on 12 February 2008, following cancer-related complications.

SIR KENNETH BRADSHAW
A former Clerk of the UK House of Commons

Sir Kenneth Bradshaw died on 31 October 2007. He served the UK Parliament for 40 years. But the IPU remembers him more for his outstanding service to the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments, which he served in a full range of capacities for over 25 years from as early as 1955. Sir Kenneth is the only person to have been both Secretary and President of the ASGP after having also held the position of Vice-President of the Association.

CONTACTS :

Inter-Parliamentary Union
The House of Parliaments
5, chemin du Pommier
P.O. Box 330
1218 Grand-Saconnex
Geneva - Switzerland
Phone (+4122) 919 41 50
Fax (+4122) 919 41 60
e-mail: postbox@mail.ipu.org

*Office of the Permanent
Observer to the United Nations in
New York*
Inter-Parliamentary Union
Room 3002,
220 East 42nd Street
New York, N.Y. 10017
USA
Phone (++1) 212 557 58 80
Fax (++1) 212 557 39 54
e-mail: ny-office@mail.ipu.org

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Editor-in-Chief:
Luisa Ballin

Assisted by:
Akiyo Afouda
Stara Ahmidouch
Mohamed Amani
Bérénice Auffret-Pereira
Norah Babic
Julie Ballington
Catherine Blondelle
Martin Chungong
Anda Filip
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Laurence Marzal
Alessandro Motter
George Opocensky
Andy Richardson
Mari Sandström
Ingeborg Schwarz
Valeria Sistik
Alain Valtat
Hiroko Yamaguchi

Website:
Peyre Castelier
Serguei Tchelnokov

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IPU to continue sensitizing political leaders on female genital mutilation

To mark the International Day of Zero Tolerance to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on 6 February last, over 150 representatives of international organizations, civil society and the local authorities in Geneva gathered at *The House of Parliaments* to discuss ways of putting an end to the harmful practice.

IPU Secretary General, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, called for synergy among international organizations, political and religious leaders, the media, civil society and the medical corps so that the goal to which we aspired at the African Parliamentary Conference held in Dakar, Senegal, in December 2005, "to abandon this practice within a generation" may become reality. IPU is committed to continue its drive to sensitize political leaders and men and women in Africa and beyond to the need to continue this work and

to form a network. "There is no question about the importance of framing laws, but information and awareness-raising are essential because if the laws are not passed, there is a high chance that they won't be implemented," added Mr. Johnsson.

Ms. Fabienne Bugnon, of the Department of Institutions, state of Geneva, read out a message sent by Ms. Micheline Calmy-Rey, Federal Councillor and Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs, in which she expressed her conviction that "only a strong and international alliance will enable us to convince people that such practices must be abandoned without delay". Ms. Bugnon recalled that every 15 seconds, somewhere in the world a little girl is a victim of cutting. "Together we have to be able to put an end to this human tragedy", she said. For international organizations such

as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), WHO and UNICEF, female genital mutilation constitutes an act of violence against the physical, sexual and psychological integrity of women, and are an affront to fundamental human rights and the rights of the child. Two million girls are excised every year in the name of tradition.

Ms. Berhane Ras-Work, of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices, recalled that female genital mutilation is not only practised in 28 African countries, but also in countries in the Arabian Peninsula, especially Yemen and Oman, as well as in Malaysia and Indonesia. Ms. Ndioro Ndiaye of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) added that although FGM has for long been considered taboo, nowadays, because of migratory flows, the problem is taking on an increasingly international scope.

The President of the State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, Mr. Laurent Moutinot, concluded by saying that it was difficult to combat practices that were considered normal "because we first have to show that they are not". Professor Abdoulaye Sow, an anthropologist and lecturer at the University of Nouakchott (Mauritania), made an appeal to dispel the myths surrounding the practice, stressing that FGM is not based on any religious, medical, social or aesthetic imperative.

Representatives of IOM, WHO, OHCHR, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Inter-African Committee, the Department of Institutions of Geneva, UNICEF Switzerland as well as representatives of civil society were in attendance to this panel, moderated by Euronews journalist Mohamed Abdel Azim.



Photo: IPU/G.Fortunato

The IPU called for synergy among international organizations, political and religious leaders, the media, civil society and the medical corps.