

THE WORLD OF PARLIAMENTS



Legislators leading the change for health care

"Care for mothers, newborns and children is at the heart of human progress and a country's well-being. We are 44,098 parliamentarians globally. Can't we do something individually and collectively that can change the lives of mothers and children? We have the power. We have the voice. Do we have the courage?", said Dr. Gertrude Mongella, President of the Pan-African Parliament, on the occasion of the IPU Assembly held in April in Cape Town, where leading global health experts, policymakers and parliamentarians convened to address the urgent need for accelerated progress to reduce maternal, newborn and child deaths if internationally-agreed targets are to be met. See also interview with Dr. Francisco Songane, former Health Minister of Mozambique on pages 2-3. ▀



IPU supports United Nations Millennium Development Goals

Several articles of this issue of *The World of Parliaments* focus on some of the eight United Nations Millennium Goals (MDGs). The MDGs, which range from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS by the target date of 2015, agreed by all the world's countries and leading development agencies, have harnessed unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest and the IPU supports this challenge. *Governance and Millennium Development Goals: The role of parliamentary lead-*

ership is the theme of a feature article written by United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro. Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger is the subject of the Editorial by IPU President Pier Ferdinando Casini. Promoting gender equality and empowering women is elaborated on in the recent IPU survey launched at

the IPU Assembly in Cape Town. Reducing child mortality and improving maternal health is the core message of the interview with Dr. Francisco Songane, former Health Minister of Mozambique, and combating HIV/AIDS was addressed at the IPU parliamentary briefing held in New York in June. ▀

THE GOALS

- 1 Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 2 Achieve universal primary education
- 3 Promote gender equality and empower women
- 4 Reduce child mortality
- 5 Improve maternal health
- 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- 7 Ensure environmental sustainability
- 8 Develop a global partnership for development

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MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS 4 AND 5: REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY AND IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

*Dr. Francisco Songane,
former Health Minister of Mozambique, to political leaders:*

“Be pragmatic and find solutions!”

According to the 2008 report *Tracking Progress in Maternal, Newborn & Child Survival*, few of the 68 developing countries that account for 97% of maternal and child deaths worldwide are making adequate progress to provide critical health care needed to save the lives of women, infants and children. In Cape Town, legislators and health experts discussed the role they can play in accelerating action to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4 and 5 on reducing child and maternal mortality. For Dr. Francisco Songane, Director of the *Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health* and former Health Minister of Mozambique, the context in which countries are operating should also be taken into consideration. Interview:

Q: What do you expect from parliamentarians?

Dr. Francisco Songane: It was important to get them informed and the IPU Assembly was a very good opportunity to provide information. It was indeed the right moment to accelerate the momentum as we were presenting the report on the analysis of progress in 68 countries at the Cape Town Assembly. Legislators will go back to their respective countries with information on how to act properly. Thanks to their influence and their authority as lawmakers and people who decide on the budget allocations, they will be in a position to monitor what their governments are doing and if the plans are implemented. Our Report also mentioned the problem of inequality and parliamentarians have to be watchful and make sure that this aspect on the provision



Dr. Francisco Songane, Director of the *Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health*.

of health care while addressing inequality is taken care of. Parliaments and governments must work together to change the situation.

Q: Concretely how can it be done?

F.S.: I suggest that legislators set up their own committee or task the committees dealing with social affairs in their respective countries to follow these issues, every year or according to the calendar of their monitoring processes. They should also see if the question of maternal and child health care, but also food for all, is addressed properly. I hope they will agree and they will come along with us. It is important that we share our findings and decide together how they can monitor progress.

Q: Health care for the most vulnerable has taken on dramatic proportions nowadays with the global financial crisis. Is financial support enough to help the most vulnerable?

F.S.: First of all, it is a question of awareness and political commitment. Money is a crucial factor to build infrastructures for example. But we know why people are dying and what to do to avoid that. We also know that in some cases the interventions are not reaching the people in need, so we have to address the issue of allocation or reallocation of resources. Wherever there is a lack of money and additional resources cannot be mobilized, we expect solidarity. But we have to put our house in order in our country first.

IPU-COUNTDOWN Session



Finn Martin Vallersnes MP
(Norway left) and
Dr Yoshio Yatsu,
Member of House of
Representatives of Japan

Quotable quotes:

"Parliamentarians will not be limited to words but will indeed take action to improve maternal, newborn and child survival."

Mr. Yoshio Yatsu, Member of the House of Representatives of Japan

"Members of parliament do have a role to play but need to hear from partners with concrete information and actions."

Ms. Sylvia Sinabulya, Member of Parliament of Uganda

"Donor countries need to listen more directly to colleagues, including civil society in developing countries, and joining IPU and Countdown to 2015 has provided such a vehicle."

Mr. Finn Martin Vallersnes, Member of Parliament of Norway

"Countdown has given MPs a gift because they have made this information accessible and they are eager to share it with us. Civil society, international NGOs and health workers are the different communities that need to come together to work with us parliamentarians."

Mr. Anders B. Johnsson – IPU Secretary General

Q: You are a former health minister and you know that in many countries budgets allocated to social affairs are reduced. How can this problem be solved?

F.S.: My question is: if the area of health care is so important, why are we cutting the money needed? We have no basis to say that we have to cut money, we need to address it. Let's find ways of changing that attitude. We, at the Partnership, are coordinating with different institutions. One element to be brought into consideration is the context in which countries are operating, or in other words, the agreement they have with the IMF and the World Bank. The IMF has to change its attitude and address the issues of lack of resources and lack of available manpower and open up and allow countries to spend more in the social sector.

Q: Do you think that the forthcoming G8 summit in July should address these themes?

F.S.: Legislators and especially those from developed countries could ask their prime ministers to put the question of maternal, newborn and child health on the top of the agenda of the G8 Summit in Japan and ask their leaders to deliver on their previous commitment.

Q: What about developing countries?

F.S. What is needed is the commitment of their leadership and proper allocation or reallocation of resources, not to mention support to these areas. I ask them to get the different partners in the government to work together. I tell them: be pragmatic and find solutions! We need to learn from each other. There are experiences in some countries on how pragmatism works in order to change the situation. Let's use them.

In the press

Call to prevent 10 million maternal and child deaths

The three-day world conference, "*Countdown to 2015*", concluded in Cape Town, South Africa, with a call to scale up investment in basic health services and human resources to reduce the number of deaths of children and women – estimated at over 10 million annually, report the agencies. Ministers and parliamentarians participated in the conference on tracking global progress to reduce maternal, newborn and child deaths. The conference, held in parallel with the 118th Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, was convened to assess progress in essential health services for women and children in the 68 developing countries which account for 97 per cent of maternal and child deaths worldwide. The delegates attending the 118th IPU Assembly committed to scale up action to reach MDGs 4 and 5, and agreed to review progress at their next Assembly, to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in April 2009.

**The Independent – Bangladesh –
22 April 2008**

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 1: ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

Food democracy: A policy that should place the individual's well-being at the centre

by Mr. Pier Ferdinando Casini, IPU President



Photo: IPU/G. Cabrera

Barely a month before the recent Rome High-Level Conference on World Food Security, the IPU held its Assembly in South Africa. The overriding theme of the parliamentary meeting was *Pushing back the frontiers of poverty*, which is perhaps the single most acute handicap afflicting our world, and the prime reason why human aspirations so rarely find fulfilment. Poverty paralyses: when daily life is a struggle to survive, nothing else matters.

As the Assembly was deliberating this issue, food prices were skyrocketing and riots were taking place in countries in every corner of the globe. This latest crisis adds to the enormous challenges facing democracy in societies where a large proportion of people are fighting to survive on a daily basis. In such situations, public priorities are food, health and shelter; when a person is hungry, no amount of freedom of speech will meet his or her basic needs.

This recent food crisis therefore represents a huge challenge not only to people who have to contend with food shortages and may face starvation, but also to democracy itself. It is essential that democratic institutions, and foremost among them parliaments, address this issue to make sure that we pursue the right policies and that we have the right kind of laws in place.

This is no mean challenge. The statistics alone are daunting. Projections estimate that food production needs to grow by a further 50 per cent in the next 20 years to meet demand. Achieving that will require a new agricultural revolution. Moreover, the statistics and the analyses which are presented to us point to some very uncomfortable truths, one of which would have it that it is the development model which we are pursuing

which is undermining our ability to feed ourselves.

Indeed, one of the the main causes of higher prices comes from rising demand due to rapidly rising income growth, particularly in emerging economies. Not to mention the price of oil, and rising costs caused by speculation and climate change. Moreover, we are resorting more and more to biofuels to meet our ever increasing demand for energy. Some experts estimate that as much as one third of the increase in food prices is due to the demand that biofuels place on grain. Our current development model is also behind much of the climate change, water scarcity, declining availability of arable land and reduced fish stocks experienced recently.

At the same time, the gap between rich and poor is widening and we may well reach a situation in which relative inequality can have absolute implications for the world's poor; a world where the burgeoning global middle class inadvertently takes food beyond

the purchasing power of the world's poorest people. Those people, as we should all know, are in their overwhelming majority women and children.

I therefore welcome recent efforts by the international community to take stock of the current situation and to start putting together a collective response. We need a global policy on food that is clear in its objectives. It must be a policy that seeks to feed all of the earth's inhabitants as healthily as possible.

When designing this policy we would be well advised to think in terms of what many call "food democracy". It provides a better conceptual framework than "food security" for designing future policy. Food democracy implies that the policy must be driven by the same values that underpin democracy: that is, respect for the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, social justice and economic and social development. In other words: a policy that places the individual and his or her well-being at the centre. ▀

Parliaments invited to commemorate International Day of Democracy

The United Nations General Assembly established late last year a new International Day to celebrate Democracy, which will be commemorated for the first time on 15 September 2008. Highly symbolical, the date coincides with the adoption, in September 1997, of the IPU Universal Declaration on Democracy. Speakers of parliament are invited to undertake activities that could highlight the place of parliament in a democracy to give the widest possible visibility to this first commemoration.

This day would be an opportunity for parliaments to emphasize the importance of democracy, what it involves, the challenges it faces as well as the opportunities it offers, and the central responsibility that all parliaments have as the key institution of democracy. And also to examine and discuss how parliament performs its democratic functions.

Parliaments are invited to organize an event on democracy in one form or another on or as close as possible to 15 September. A panel event will be held at the House of Parliaments on the morning of 15 September on the concept of democracy, underscoring that while the existence of a parliament may not in itself guarantee democracy, there can be no democracy without a parliament.

Governance and the Millennium Development Goals: The role of parliamentary leadership

by Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro

United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro delivered a speech at the inaugural ceremony of the April IPU Assembly in Cape Town, in the presence of South African President Thabo Mbeki.

Dr. Migiro, a former minister for foreign affairs and international cooperation of Tanzania, took office as Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations in February 2007. Before that, she had served as minister for community development, gender and children for five years. As foreign minister, Ms. Migiro spearheaded Tanzania's engagement in the pursuit of peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. She also served as Chair of the Council of Ministers meetings of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, a process that culminated in a Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region.



Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro addressing the IPU Assembly in Cape Town.

Parliaments are structures of the modern State in which parliamentarians serve as the political and moral agents of democratic society. As an institution, parliament charts the public agenda while members are expected to press for conditions that are conducive to the needs of those whom they represent. At the core of the public agenda in most developing countries is the role and responsibility of parliaments in pushing back the frontiers of poverty and ensuring accountability in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) launched in 2000.

These Goals aimed at reducing poverty and alleviating adverse education, health and environmental factors for the most vulnerable women and children were set in the year 2000 to be met by 2015. It is important to assess what has been accomplished and what remains to be done. The results are mixed. Global poverty rates are falling, led by Asia. Since 2000, three million more children now survive annually, two million more people are being treated for AIDS, and millions more children are in school. This is in global terms. Individual countries and

regions have witnessed remarkable progress in certain Goals at the local and regional levels. Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda are just a few of the countries where public school enrolment is on the rise. And Senegal is making major strides toward meeting the water and sanitation MDGs. On health, Malawi has drastically reduced child mortality rates. And across South Asia child survival rates have been raised through the implementation of massive vaccination campaigns. In addition, countries around the world are demonstrating how the HIV epidemic can be contained.

Strides have also been made in malaria control thanks to free bed nets for families in Niger, Togo and Zambia. One of the most striking advances is the 91 per cent reduction in deaths caused by measles across Africa as well as the elimination of maternal and neonatal tetanus in Viet Nam with the support of UNICEF and WHO.

Progress is possible

Progress is possible. The ingredients for success are well-known. Strong government often means a strong

parliamentary leadership with committed legislators who not only frame laws and policies that give priority to these socio-economic programmes but through an active – often personal engagement – at the grass-roots and national level to ensure implementation through good governance and popular mobilization.

Such policies inspire and support public-private partnerships. Sound strategies enable research and understanding of problems in the health, education and social fields in the broader context of rural and urban development. Identifying vulnerable areas and groups in the country allow timely public investments at the appropriate level. Related economic and administrative policies, the laying of infrastructure, fiscal incentives, and targeted budgetary allocations empowering affected communities – particularly women – can play a critical role in mobilizing civil society institutions and private sector participation.

These successes should be nurtured and reinforced by the international community with financial/technical assistance and compatible trade poli-



Photo: UN/Ky Chung

Signatures of participants on flyer at a panel discussion of the Millennium Development Goals at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

cies at the earliest. This has become urgent in view of the current food crisis that has begun to affect more people all over the world. The consequences are severe – riots in over 30 countries, 100 million people worldwide at risk and 30 million Africans likely to fall into poverty. According to the World Bank, rocketing food prices have set back the fight against poverty by almost seven years! Poor children are more susceptible to suffer on account of hunger leading to malnutrition and learning disabilities pre-empting a full and productive life. A weak child does not make a strong citizen.

Economic slowdown, climate change and natural disasters are further challenges to the realization of programmes associated with MDGs competing for resources and attention of governments. As the latest Human Development Report notes, 40 per cent of the world's population lives in poverty and are unable to meet their daily basic needs. And these 2.6 billion people are at risk to face first-hand the impacts of dangerous climate change and human development reversals. The maintenance and enhancement of the world's ecological infrastructure is fundamental to advance the quality of life for the poor – urban or rural – as they directly depend and subsist on land, water and air.

This is especially true in the least developed countries. Africa and even

some of the fast-growing South-Asian economies face serious challenges in improving nutrition and reaching certain other Goals. Parliamentarians as agents of change must be sensitive not only to the domestic inter-connectedness between health, education and broader environment/development vectors, but should be also increasingly cognizant of the reality that scarce resources flow mostly to credible and accountable projects.

Opening up access to land and markets for the poorest

Despite hurdles, the MDGs remain attainable. This places a heavier burden on all States – developed and developing – to follow through on their commitments. In the developed countries of the North, parliaments should honour their national commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) to official development assistance (ODA) which, according to latest figures, is in steep decline. Besides the quantum of international assistance, equally important is its quality. Domestic and international assistance should empower vulnerable populations and women, encouraging self-sufficiency in coping with core needs and sustainable livelihoods. This means opening up access to land

and markets for the poorest, including a trading system that levels the playing field for agricultural products from the least developed countries.

Parliamentarians can serve as facilitators of responsible governance at the interface of national and local policies, and national and international policies that affect the substance and pace of implementing MDGs.

To scale up efforts towards the implementation of the MDGs the UN Secretary-General has launched the MDG Africa Steering Group, which brings together an unprecedented group of Principals of the leading inter-governmental bodies dedicated to Africa's development. This group has recently endorsed a set of concrete measures aimed to advance the MDGs in Africa and support the mobilization of financial resources to address the impact of food price increase affecting a number of countries in Africa.

“Parliamentarians can serve as facilitators of responsible governance at the interface of national and local policies”

Secretary-General Ban, working together with the President of the General Assembly, has also decided to convene world leaders at an MDG high-level event on 25 September in New York to raise global awareness and maintain the momentum in support of the achievement of the Goals. Here it would be necessary to reinforce the momentum by a consensus on approaches to deal with emerging challenges and enhancing resource mobilization for an accelerated implementation of MDGs – at least in areas most affected by the current food crisis. Good governance would require parliamentarians to convene similar MDG groups consisting of local stakeholders in the communities they serve to track implementation of MDG goals.

Good governance is a value in its own right. This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This timeless document has a great deal in com-

mon with the Millennium Declaration. Advances in human development and efforts to overcome poverty will be stunted unless these declarations are seen as two sides of the same coin. The realization of the values and objectives in these documents can only be achieved through a constant dialogue between a civil State and civic society.

The IPU is an important partner of the United Nations in the historic effort to reach the MDGs. Joint initiatives such as the online International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (iKNOW Politics) connect women candidates and leaders worldwide with the advice they need to be effective in office on this and other issues are an example of imaginative collaboration.

In many respects, parliamentarians are on the frontline of the quest to bring practical meaning to Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that all humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights. As representatives of their citizens, they must be seen to be the conscience of their constituencies and countries in the efforts to bring life to the Millennium Development Goals in service of the less fortunate. ▀

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 8

The dealmaker

The IPU has done much to create political momentum to support Goal 8 "to develop a global partnership for development". A comprehensive resolution from the 118th Assembly in Cape Town this past April provides several pointers as to what parliaments can do on their own to help make foreign aid work.

Goal 8 essentially covers three areas where only the rich countries can make a difference: fair trade rules, to provide market access to developing countries so that they can increase their export earnings for development; debt sustainability, to lower the debt load of highly-indebted countries so that they can spend more of their scarce resources on their own people; and official development assistance (ODA), to provide more aid and with fewer strings attached so that developing countries, and particularly the poorest, can better address their own needs.

The IPU has also embarked on a new process of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which is bringing together all stakeholders in this issue, such as parliamentarians, civil society organizations, and local authorities, as well as "new" actors such as private foundations. The process consists of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), which will meet every two years in New York during the ECOSOC session. As part of that venture, the IPU helped organize a United Nations stakeholder forum in Rome on 12 and 13 June and also participated in a number of specialized debates during the past year.

There have been resolutions on debt sustainability to achieve the MDGs; there has also been a new process put into motion called the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, which has helped hundreds of parliamentarians make sense of on-going trade negotiations and of the internal workings of the WTO. Lately, the IPU has become more deeply engaged in support of the ODA agenda as well.

To date, there have been improvements but also many disappointments. The most obvious disappointment comes from the Doha Round of the trade negotiations, which is still up in the air. According to the United Nations, the annual losses from trade to developing countries are now about US\$

700 billion. On debt sustainability, at least two special initiatives have been fielded during these years, but they barely address the needs of middle-income countries and they do not take into consideration a country's ability to achieve the MDGs. Regarding ODA, the balance is more positive, but still delicate.

The 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness provides an important new framework to bring about greater ownership of aid by recipient countries. The trend toward less aid has been reversed, so that the goal of 0.7 per cent of GDP does not look like a pie in the sky anymore. Yet, partly because of global financial turmoil

and other unsettling economic developments, the trend upward appears to be stalling once again.

We are already at the mid-point toward 2015, when the MDGs are supposed to be achieved. A lot of time has been lost. Yet, with more political will, which the IPU is committed to mobilizing, we may still make it.



Photo: UN/Evan Schneider

Employees and officials gather on the north lawn of United Nations Headquarters in New York to "Stand Up Against Poverty" and read a pledge urging everyone to do their part for the Millennium Development Goals.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY

Women's influence in politics is on the rise but gender equality a long way off

A new study undertaken by the IPU has revealed that the participation of women in political life is changing political priorities across the globe. Women are making their presence felt in the world's parliaments and are beginning to redefine political agendas. The study, entitled *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, was launched at the thirteenth Meeting of Women Parliamentarians held during the 118th IPU Assembly in Cape Town.

Conducted between 2006 and 2008, the survey collates the views of nearly 300 men and women parliamentarians from 110 countries on gender equality in politics. With their experience as women, mothers, wives and daughters, women parliamentarians make a unique contribution to political life. Survey respondents highlighted that it is women, and not men, who have been instrumental in placing issues such as gender-based violence, trafficking of women and children, equal pay, child care and parental leave on the political agenda. They also point out that greater participation by women in parliament



Photo: AFP

Parliaments need more women.

would ensure that their concerns, and many others that men might overlook or give low priority to, are addressed. Several respondents indicated that without the involvement of women in politics, the subject of violence against women would not be receiving the attention currently being given to it.

Men believed their greatest contributions are to foreign affairs, economic and trade matters and

justice and constitutional issues. Unlike women, they do not prioritize equality between the sexes or social development matters. While some male respondents felt that they raise issues of concern to women in their work, much more needs to be done to forge a complementary partnership between women and men. The survey also cautioned that "although it is women who are predominantly responsible for highlighting women's concerns, this does not mean that these are their only concerns." Some women emphasized that they are making important contributions to a broad range of political issues.

Women continue to encounter obstacles in parliaments

The survey unfortunately confirmed that women continue to encounter obstacles in parliaments. First, their participation remains limited, at 18 per cent on average across the world, so they often have to struggle to be heard. The more women there are in parliament, the easier it is to address women's issues and to change the gender dynamics in the chamber and

IPU PUBLICATIONS

Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments 2008

This publication collates insights from both men and women parliamentarians into the factors that shape decision-making. It provides concrete examples of how parliamentarians are working to attain gender equality in politics at the national level, and how parliaments can become more gender-sensitized. Survey respondents also identify several structural changes that could help to promote women's access to and full participation in parliament. For more, see the IPU website at <http://www.ipu.org/english/surveys.htm#equality08>



in committees. Second, women often struggle to balance their parliamentary workload with domestic responsibilities. The working methods of parliaments are sometimes not amenable to the presence of women, and rules need to be changed and infrastructure improved, such as through changing the sitting times of parliament or introducing childcare facilities. Third, the study found the support of the ruling party to be the most important factor in introducing and enacting gender-related legislation. Yet several women parliamentarians pointed out that the gender-based policies they wished to pursue were at odds with the policies of their political parties, so making change at this level is vital.

In short, the survey revealed that much remains to be done. Parliamentarians identified several structural changes that could help to promote women's access to and full participation in parliament, such as strengthening parliamentary committees on

In the press

New Study shows women making progress on political scene

Almost 18 per cent of the members of parliament worldwide are women, according to a new study released to coincide with the Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in South Africa. The report says many of the barriers that have kept women from parliament have been removed, but that much more needs to be done for women to be on an equal footing with men. The report, entitled *Equality in politics: a survey of women and men in parliaments*, says women are making slow but steady progress. In 1945, only three per cent of members of parliament worldwide were women. That figure is now close to 18 per cent. Researcher Julie Ballington, of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, conducted the global survey. She says some of the biggest gains made by women have been in countries recovering from war. "Several post-conflict States did very well in terms of post-conflict representation", she said. "The reason for that is that all the rules and structures were written from scratch. Women also took part in the liberation struggles in several countries".

Voice of America News – 15 April 2008

gender equality or caucuses of women parliamentarians; implementing changes in parliamentary processes and facilities to make them more fam-

ily-friendly and ensuring more balanced participation of women and men in political parties. Above all though, parliaments need more women. ▀

IPU PUBLICATIONS

Launch of Indonesian version of IPU-UNICEF Handbook



The Parliament of Indonesia and UNICEF called on all members of society to take urgent action to stop violence against children. The plea came at the launch of the Indonesian version of the *Handbook for Parliamentarians on Eliminating Violence against Children* last May. This was to follow up the official launch of the guide during the IPU Assembly held in Nusa Dua, Bali in 2007 and hosted by the Parliament of Indonesia. The launch of the Handbook for legislators was a global effort initiated by IPU and UNICEF to support the United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children.

Studies conducted by UNICEF confirm that violence affects children regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity and economic status. In Indonesia, although accurate figures are not available on the

extent of violence and abuse against children, it is considered to be a widespread occurrence. It is often difficult to get people to talk about the subject of violence against children because culturally, the issue is still perceived to be a domestic affair.

From left to right: Mr. Marco Luigi Corsi (UNICEF), Mr. Agung Laksono (Speaker of the Indonesian House of Representatives) and Mr. Abdillah Toha (Vice-President of the IPU Executive Committee).

Parliaments should fight organized crime in Central America

The expansion of organized crime and the proliferation of gangs once again put security and effective administration of justice high on the agenda of Central America. Parliaments should step up to the plate to fight social and economic inequality and organized crime in the region, said legislators gathered in San Salvador.

Organized jointly by the IPU and the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador, the two-day seminar (6-7 May) gave parliamentarians from Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and PARLACEN (Parliament of Central America) an opportunity to take a critical look at the challenges that remained more than twenty years after the signing of the historic Esquipulas II Accord that brought democratic governance and stability to Central America. The seminar came on the heels of a unique national roundtable with high-profile Salvadoran personalities who had been involved in the nation's peace negotiations.

The participants declared that the new era of State institutions brought about by the peace accords, albeit a step in the right direction, had not been sufficiently lasting or far-reaching to address these challenges effectively. Even though the absence of armed conflict and the organization of regular free and fair elections had transformed society to a large extent in Central America, many of the underlying causes of conflict still persisted, and in several cases, were becoming more pronounced, as evidenced by rising poverty rates and concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, explained legislators in San Salvador.

Parliaments should step up to the plate, first of all, by forging a sound social and economic agenda and by strengthening the independence and effectiveness of the judiciary, with some seminar participants suggesting that the agenda originate at the regional level, drawing inspiration from the European Union, and lead to an

Esquipulas III or a "social Esquipulas". Such an ambitious programme would require parliaments to capitalize on what they should do best, namely to offer a genuine and effective platform for dialogue and action in a context of respect and trust, with the full participation of all sectors of society, including new generations of political leaders, civil society organizations and the economic sector.

Political parties also need to be part of the equation: they should seek to avoid the paralysis of polarization by working in the interest of the common good, promote a culture of integrity, act responsibly when preparing their candidates for political office, and "democratize" themselves from within through a process of political reform.

See conclusions and recommendations at <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/salvador08.htm> ▸

Ms. Carmen Elena Calderón de Escalón,
President of the Foreign Affairs Committee,
Parliament of El Salvador.



Photo: IPU/R. Huizenga



Photo: IPU/A. Afouda

About one hundred participants from several countries, including legislators, gathered at the Moroccan Parliament.

Measures to prevent human trafficking must be taken

"Parliamentarians must play a pivotal role by establishing appropriate legislation and drawing up a parliamentary strategy to address effectively the issue of migration", said the legislators gathered in Rabat (Morocco) in May.

Whether seen as a factor contributing to the development or disintegration of the socio-economic fabric of countries of origin and destination, the issue of migration is a topical one.

The recent waves of violence against immigrants in South Africa and Italy are proof of this reality. Far from finding an appropriate, and above all concerted, solution to this international problem, States are taking national measures that increasingly restrict migratory flows.

The African continent is affected in more ways than one by this issue. At once places of origin, transit and destination, African countries often have no migration policy in place and can do little other than oppose the measures taken by other countries, particularly European countries. The conference, entitled "Africa and migration: challenges, problems and solutions", was organized by the African Parliamentary Union (APU) in co-operation with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Office of the United Nations High Com-

missioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It brought together at the Parliament of Morocco in Rabat about one hundred participants, including parliamentarians, civil servants of Member Parliaments, APU observers, regional, continental and international institutions, and members of the Spanish Senate.

During their presentations, the experts argued in favour of a migration policy that was integrated on the regional and continental levels. Following the workshops on migration and development, the humanitarian aspects of migration, migration and human rights, and regional initiatives, the participants recommended encouraging investment in countries of origin in order to foster an employment-generating environment.

They called on destination countries to compensate financially the "brain drain" experienced by countries of origin. They urged countries that had not already done so to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and to bring their domestic legislation into line with its provisions. Since migration was closely linked to human rights, the participants invited the countries of origin and destination to take appropriate measures to prevent human trafficking and to enforce migrants' rights. As part of a concerted effort, the participants advocated cooperation between African countries, and establishing a dialogue with European countries based on mutual respect and the interests of both parties.

Visit to Sudan

By Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, IPU Secretary General

Hyat is twenty five years old and lives with her husband and five year old son in the Abuja camp for displaced persons outside the town of El Fasher in the State of Northern Darfur. She is one of over 400,000 persons in that State who have been displaced by the conflict in Darfur.

I met Hyat as she was standing with other women at one of the many water pumps scattered throughout the village waiting for her turn to fill her water jars. She looked well and told me she received good services in the camp. Her son had started school and they had a roof over their head. Yes, she would return to her village, she told me, but only once there was full security. After a moment's hesitation she added that the village also needed water and services.

The story of Hyat, I was told, is a common story. Tens of thousands of men, women and children have been uprooted by a brutal conflict and have found safety and a modicum of normal life in camps like the one I visited on a Friday morning. While the conflict has abated to the point where some of the men now return during the rainy season to work on the land, most of the displaced persons remain in the camps.

The crisis in Darfur has received extensive coverage in the medias; and rightly so. There is however more than one story that needs to be told. There is also the story of people like Hyat who will want to go back to their villages but cannot do so because rebels still operate in some of the areas and basic services and development are lacking; in fact they were never there in the first place.

Therein lies the dilemma. A solution

to the humanitarian situation in Darfur will necessarily require substantial development efforts which can only be launched once peace has been restored.

This point was made forcefully later that morning by the Speaker of the State Legislative Council, El Nur Mohamed Ibrahim. Speaking on behalf of the Council, which brings together representatives of the political forces in the State which includes all the rebel movements that signed the Abuja peace agreement in 2006 to end the conflict, the Speaker asked the international community to put greater pressure on rebel movements still operating in the region to sit down for peace talks.

Peace can not be won on the battle ground. It can only come about as a result of political negotiations with all the parties. We are ready to sit down for such talks at any time and any place, and without preconditions, he said.

The situation in Darfur is a tragedy not only for the people who have been directly affected by the conflict, but also for people throughout the country and, in more ways than one, for the international community as well. Instead of celebrating the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that put an end to one of the longest wars in Africa and devoting every effort and resource it can muster to making it succeed, the government of Sudan and the international community are today spending enormous amounts of time, energy and resources on a conflict that should already have been put to rest.

The visit to Sudan offered me an opportunity to refocus on the peace efforts and examine how the IPU and its Member Parliaments can assist in the implementation of the CPA. During one week I visited the National Assembly in Khartoum as well as the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly in Juba in the south. Discussions were held with the Speakers and the leadership in the parliaments, leaders of all the political parties, the President of the Republic of Sudan and the First

Vice-President and President of the Southern Sudan Government, cabinet ministers, and many representatives of international organizations, academia and the media.

The CPA establishes a unity government and a series of transitional institutions composed of members who are initially appointed by the political forces in the country. They will be replaced through elections in 2009. The CPA is premised on a significant devolution of power and southern Sudan has its own parliament as has each one of the twenty five States that make up the republic. By 2011, southern Sudan will hold a referendum on self-determination.

While the two main parties enjoy a comfortable majority in parliament – the National Congress Party holds 52 percent of the seats and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement 28 percent – the parliament makes a determined effort to take decisions by consensus.

A recent example involves the new electoral law. The two main parties have been negotiating for many months and during my visit they agreed on a common text. It was tabled before parliament where it will be scrutinized by all the political parties, amended and adopted.

For the national parliamentary elections, the law foresees that 60 percent of the seats will be filled in territorial constituencies through a majority vote. The remaining 40 percent will be filled by proportional representation at the level of each State through two separate lists; one will elect 25 percent women and another will elect a further 15 percent.

The National Assembly in Khartoum can fall back on a long history of legislative work and experience dating back to independence in 1955. Not so the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly which is lacking in procedures, services, trained staff and experienced parliamentarians.

The last time I met Mr. Remy Oller Itoring was in 1976 when he was Minister of Education in southern Sudan. Today, he is Deputy Speaker and introduced me to the realities of lawmaking in southern Sudan. So far we have



The IPU Secretary General was received by the Speaker of the National Assembly of Sudan, Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir.

Photo: Parliament of Sudan

Photo: Parliament of Sudan



Camp for internally displaced persons in Darfur.

adopted 36 laws and a further four laws are before parliament, he said. However, we are in need of almost everything. We don't have committee staff, we need a resource centre to do research and provide MPs with information. We have no offices in parliament and none in our constituencies.

The discussion with several of the committee chairs was illustrative. They spoke eloquently of the need to build an institution from scratch. Services, staff, procedures; there was a glaring need for everything.

The situation is essentially the same in the twenty five State Legislative Councils, particularly those in the south. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs of the Southern Sudan Government, Dr. Martin Elia Lomurö, would like the IPU and parliaments to provide assistance to all of them. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and AWEPA are extending support, but that is a drop in the ocean and much more is needed, he says.

The women are present in large numbers in the National Assembly as well as in the Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly; and they are organizing themselves into caucuses to defend women's rights in politics. The women's parliamentary caucus in Khartoum held a first conference earlier this year and is now looking for support to implement activities. Their sisters in the south met the day I left to start planning for the 2009

elections. We need attention and support says Mary Kiden Kimbo who is Minister of Gender, Social Welfare and Religious Affairs in Juba. Samia Hassen from the caucus in Khartoum agrees.

Everywhere I went I repeated the same message from the IPU. Parliament is the central institution within a democracy through which the will of the people is expressed, laws are passed and government is held to account. It is in parliament that the divergent and often conflicting interests in society are reflected and debated. This role is essential in countries which, like Sudan, are emerging from conflict and building peace.

It is possible to build consensus in favour of inclusive policies through political dialogue and negotiation in parliament and, hence, manage and avert outright conflict. In parliament, peace agreements have to be converted into everyday reality through national laws, budgetary appropriations and a vigorous oversight of the government and administration of the country.

I also made the point that IPU's unique contribution to peace building efforts consists of the extensive collective experience of its member parliaments, many of which have had to manage conflict and help to build peace. It is this knowledge and experience which the IPU makes available to parliaments. The IPU also mobilizes support from the United Nations and its specialized agencies and programs with which it enjoys privileged relationships.

The Speaker of the Transitional National Assembly of Sudan, Mr. Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Tahir, would welcome such support for the parliament over which he presides as well as for the parliament in the south and the State assemblies. We all need to build up strong research, documentation and information services and we can all do with support in the area of peace and reconciliation, he said.

Speaker Al-Tahir welcomes greater involvement by the Members of the IPU in support of the peace process. We are open to visits from all parliaments and we want them to see and learn for themselves, he says. They can help us a lot by building capacity in our parliaments to legislate and hold our government to account, and by scrutinizing their own government's policies to make sure that they also are supportive of peace and development in Sudan.

That could be a very constructive parliamentary action in memory of the victims of the conflicts in the southern Sudan and in Darfur and a way of helping people like Hyat and her family to return to her village and build a better life. ▀

Timor-Leste: training parliamentary staff

Timor-Leste, a fledgling country with no democratic traditions, is having to devise and implement its democratic system from scratch. The country's history of foreign domination and the drawn-out struggle for freedom from that domination has left it bereft of the qualified human resources needed to drive both democratic institutions and development in a post-conflict environment. The situation is further compounded by a complex cultural and linguistic heritage. The country can boast of only a handful of legal specialists who are also

proficient in Portuguese, the official language.

In order to help allay this predicament, the IPU and UNDP have designed and are implementing a comprehensive programme of assistance which includes a component to strengthen the Parliament's human resource capacity. Indeed, the Parliament is in dire need of knowledgeable, skilled and motivated staff to assist its members in the effective performance of their duties. In May 2008, the programme organized a two-week training session for parliamentary staff

during which they were taken through the rudiments of a properly functioning parliament. Parliamentary experts from Germany and South Africa ran a workshop to enable the staff to understand better their role in and contribution to an effective parliament. The experts also provided advice and guidance to senior management and staff in their various departments. The session also provided an opportunity to assess specific training requirements for staff with a view to the implementation of a broader training programme. ▀

Albania

On 21 April 2008, the People's Assembly adopted a series of constitutional amendments, which came into force on the same day. Under the revised Constitution, the parliament will be dissolved automatically if the government loses a vote of confidence. Parliament will elect the president of the country by a simple majority vote in the fourth round of voting (previously 83 votes in the 140-member parliament were required). The amendments also changed the electoral system to a pure proportional representation (PR) system. Previously, the country had been using a mixed system under which 100 members were elected by majority vote while 40 were elected by PR in one nationwide constituency. The new system establishes closed party lists and allocates seats at the regional level. The threshold to win parliamentary representation will be 2.5 per cent for political parties and 4 per cent for coalitions. The governing and main opposition parties both supported the constitutional reforms.

Bolivia

On 28 February 2008, the National Congress adopted a law calling a constitutional referendum for 4 May. The draft constitution had been submitted to the Congress in December 2007 by the Constituent Assembly elected in July 2006. It includes a bill of rights and considerable autonomy for the country's 36 indigenous groups. Opponents of the draft argued that it places indigenous people above the rest of the population.

On 7 March 2008, the electoral authority postponed the referendum indefinitely, arguing it would be impossible to ensure "legal guarantees, sufficient time and an adequate electoral environment" on such short notice. On 8 May, the opposition-controlled Senate passed a bill ordering that fresh elections be held within 90 days for the offices of the President and Vice-President, and the nine regional governors. Those top officials

will lose their mandate if more than 53.74 per cent (i.e. the share of votes won by the President in the December 2005 elections) vote to recall them. If that happens, fresh general elections will be held. On 12 May, President Morales set 10 August as the date for the recall election.

Cameroon

On 11 April 2008, the National Assembly adopted a series of constitutional amendments which were ratified by President Paul Biya on 15 April. The amendments lifted the two-term limit for the President. Under the revised Constitution, the President is also granted immunity for acts committed during the tenure, even after leaving office. In case of a serious crisis, the President's term may be extended after consultation with President of the Constitutional Council and the bureaux of the National Assembly and the Senate. Although the 1996 Constitution provides for a bicameral parliament, the Senate had not been established as at May 2008. According to the constitutional amendments, the Senate will be elected by an electoral college of municipal councillors. The opposition Social Democratic Front criticized the amendments, saying they amounted to a "constitutional coup".

Kenya

The disputed presidential elections of December 2007 led to violent protests in which more than 1,600 people lost their lives. On 28 February 2008, under the mediation of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, President Mwai Kibaki and his election rival, Mr. Raila Odinga, signed a power-sharing agreement. The agreement provided for the creation of the post of Prime Minister (not provided for in the Constitution), who can only be removed by a no-confidence vote in Parliament. On 18 March, the National Assembly passed the Constitution of Kenya Amendment Bill 2008 to create the office of Prime Minister and two Deputy Prime Ministers, which met

with President Kibaki's approval on the same day. On 13 April, President Kibaki named Mr. Odinga as Prime Minister in a coalition cabinet comprising 40 ministers and 52 deputy ministers.

Maldives

On 13 April 2008, the People's Special Majlis (constituent assembly) voted for the 1998 Constitution to be repealed upon enactment of the new Constitution. The vote followed a heated debate in which opposition members argued that a newly introduced two-term limit for the President would be retroactively applicable to the incumbent President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. His Dhivehi Raiyyithunge Party (DRP) argued that the country was to have a totally new constitution, thus the two-term limit should not apply to President Gayoom. The decision of the People's Special Majlis paved the way for Mr. Gayoom to stand for the presidential elections, due to take place in late 2008. The People's Special Majlis also decided that all posts and institutions stipulated in the draft constitution, including the parliament, should be installed within two years of enactment of the new Constitution. The term of the current legislature will therefore continue until the election of the new one.

Myanmar

On 10 May, a constitutional referendum (see issues No. 28 and 29) was held one week after a huge cyclone hit the country, killing at least 77,000 people. The United Nations urged the authorities to postpone the referendum, but the military junta maintained the date for most of the country, postponing it to 24 May only in the cyclone-ravaged area.

A total of 27 million of the country's 57 million inhabitants were eligible to vote. The military government argued that a constitution was the key condition for holding general elections in 2010. The pro-democracy movement urged voters to reject the referendum,

arguing that the constitution favours the military junta by giving it 25 per cent of parliamentary seats. According to official results, 99.07 per cent of eligible voters turned out on 10 May, and 26 per cent on 24 May. Over 92 per cent of voters approved the new Constitution.

Under the new Constitution, nationals married to a foreigner are barred from running for public office. The provision is widely considered as a means of disqualifying pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi from running in the next elections.

Romania

On 4 March 2008, the Chamber of Deputies (lower house) endorsed the new electoral law introducing the majority system and using single-member constituencies for both the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The newly introduced deposit for candidates has been fixed at five minimum wages. The opposition Greater Romania Party (PRM) argued the elections should be accessible to the

poor, while the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania (UDMR), a member of the governing coalition, insisted that the deposit should be lowered to three minimum wages. The President promulgated the new law on 12 March.

Serbia

On 8 April 2008, the Constitutional Court ruled that the number of signatures to be collected for participation in elections must be the same for all parties, following a parliamentary initiative launched by the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). In the January 2007 elections, minority parties had been required to submit only 3,000 signatures as opposed to the required 10,000 signatures for all other parties. Although some minority parties had already collected over 10,000 signatures in preparation for snap parliamentary elections in May 2008, others were reportedly having difficulty meeting the new requirements.

Turkey

On 30 April 2008, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey voted to amend Article 301 of the Penal Code, relaxing restrictions on free speech. On 7 May, President Abdullah Gul signed the amendment into law. The previous Article banned insults to "Turkishness", a vague term often used to clamp down on dissidents. Following the changes, denigrating "Turkishness" is no longer a crime, although insulting the Turkish nation still is. Ensuring freedom of expression has been a sine qua non condition in the country's bid to enter the European Union (EU). The EU welcomed the amendment, while some human right groups argued it did not go far enough.

In the press

Zimbabwe urged to ensure "free and fair" elections

Few observers now believe a free and fair presidential election is possible in Zimbabwe. Following reports of intimidation and violence against supporters of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change, its leader Morgan Tsvangirai has pulled out of the presidential run-off. Tsvangirai got more votes than President Robert Mugabe in the first round. The Swiss-based Inter-Parliamentary Union – the world organization of parliaments – is among those calling for the Zimbabwean authorities to respect the rule of law. WRS's Adam Beaumont spoke to Anders Johnsson, Secretary General of the IPU.

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CONTACTS

Inter-Parliamentary Union

The House of Parliaments

5, chemin du Pommier

P.O. Box 330

1218 Le 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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Andy Richardson

Mari Sandström

Ingeborg Schwarz

Valeria Sistek

Alain Valtat

Hiroko Yamaguchi

Website:

Pieyre Castelier

Serguei Tchelnokov

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MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 6: COMBAT HIV/AIDS

Encouraging trends, grimmer reality

Efforts to rein in the global HIV/AIDS epidemic have not been in vain. More money is being allocated to fund the work. More people are coming to understand the basic facts about HIV. The annual rate of new HIV infections appears to be decreasing.

Behind these encouraging trends there lurks a grimmer reality. The people who are often relegated to the margins of society – the sex workers, the men who have sex with men, the injecting drug users – are still frighteningly vulnerable to the disease and continue to contract it at an alarming rate. Drug prices remain prohibitive for most carriers and only one third of the nine million people who need antiretrovirals actually get them. Children still account for one in six new infections, most of them dying before the age of two, and coverage for prevention of mother-to-child transmission is lamentably short of the target.

In June the United Nations General Assembly held its special session on

HIV/AIDS. In an unprecedented move, the Assembly explicitly encouraged parliamentarians to join their national delegations to the high-level event. About 150 MPs responded to the call, and on the eve of the special session, the IPU held a briefing for them at the United Nations in New York.

Senior representatives of UNAIDS and UNDP gave informative presentations. The meeting then embarked on a discussion in which key statements were made by US Congressman Jim McDermott, who spoke critically of governments, including his own, that impose travel restrictions on HIV carriers; Belgian Senator Marleen Timmerman, who called for legislators to examine more closely the different drivers of the disease in their regions; and Hendrietta Bogopane MP, of South Africa, who said that parliaments and all their members had to acknowledge the impact of the virus on their actual institution and openly admit its existence.

The newly enlarged IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS met in New York to distil the recommendations from the hearing and plan for future Group activities, which are intended to combine investigative field visits and regional training seminars. The IPU Handbook entitled *Taking Action against HIV* will be the basic textbook for the seminars. Plans are also being initiated for a second global parliamentary meeting on HIV/AIDS in 2009 building on the 2007 Manila event.

The events also included a lively working luncheon attended by parliamentarians, members of the diplomatic corps and leaders of multilateral organizations. The message emerging from that event was that informed, evidence-based legislation does make a difference and that as leaders in society more parliamentarians should stand up and be counted in the fight. The mothers and infants, the sex workers and drug users are going to need all the help they can get. ▀



From left to right: Ms. Hendrietta Bogopane, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, Ms. Kay Hull (moderator), and Mr. Jim McDermott.