

# The World of Parliaments

Quarterly Review of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

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## Special guest:

**Mr. Abdelwahed Radi,  
President of the House of Representatives of Morocco  
President of the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Marrakech**

*"Democracy is a strategic,  
irreversible choice"*

**Q: How would you rate the success of the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Marrakech from 17 to 23 March 2002?**

**Abdelwahed Radi:** I believe we have fulfilled all our objectives. On the agenda we had tabled issues such as globalisation and the environment. On supplementary items such as terrorism and the question of the Middle East and Palestine, we also had fruitful discussions. [As far as the Middle East is concerned], I feel that the resolution is very balanced. It captures the sentiments of all the MPs throughout the world, with a mere couple of reservations, and was adopted by consensus. The emergency item presented by Morocco, accepted unanimously, was not debated, but the drafting committee was composed of Palestinians, Israelis, representatives of IPU's five geo-political groups and Morocco. The objective was reached in that there was a dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and representatives of parliaments the world over also participated. Above all, the two parties to the conflict reached agreement on a text. This illustrates that through dialogue it is possible to find common ground. This resolution calls for a cessation of the violence and bloodshed and a return to dialogue as soon as possible, as well as respect of the UN resolutions, implementation of the Mitchell Plan, a halt to the settlements and a return to dialogue to try and achieve



Photo IPU/Moroccan Parliament

From left to right: His Majesty King Mohamed VI of Morocco, Mrs. Najma Heptulla, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, and Mr. Abdelwahed Radi, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, at the inaugural ceremony of the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Marrakech.

peace through negotiation. For there can be no solution other than a negotiated one. We also considered the propositions put forward by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia. Perhaps we can come up with a combined solution to change the critical situation on the ground.

***Q: The Middle East was very much present at Marrakech since, during the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference, the President of the French National Assembly, Mr. Raymond Forni, called a meeting with the Presidents of the various European Parliaments, the President of the Knesset and the Vice President of the Palestinian Legislative Council...***

**A.R.:** Indeed, Mr. Forni did arrange a meeting, on the sidelines of the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference, with a number of Speakers of Parliaments in attendance, particularly with the Deputy-Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, the Speaker of the People's Assembly of Egypt, the Speaker of the Belgian Senate, the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of Italy, the Speaker of the Irish Parliament, the Speaker of the Knesset and the President of IPU's Committee on Middle East Questions. Mr. Forni attempted to pursue the dialogue that was initiated in Paris (see IPU Website [www.ipu.org/](http://www.ipu.org/) *The World of Parliaments*, March 2002 issue and the January issue of the *IPU Journal*) and followed up in Athens. They agreed that the Speakers of the Parliaments of the European Union would travel to Palestine, accompanying the

Speaker of the Knesset to Ramallah in order to meet with the Palestinian Legislative Council, and to visit the Knesset. This was a European initiative launched by France.

***Q: The 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference was held at a particularly significant moment for Morocco considering that elections are due in September. Can such a conference help to strengthen the democratic process in Morocco?***

**A.R.:** Absolutely. I believe that the Moroccans organised this IPU Conference to illustrate how committed they are to democracy, the main value defended by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It was also to show that democracy is a strategic, irreversible choice. We cannot all see eye to eye on economic, cultural or social policy but democracy is the unanimous choice of all Moroccans. The Moroccan people is committed to it and will do everything it can to continue in this direction. Through this, Moroccans were able to get the credit they deserve. The confidence displayed by the IPU is an honour for Morocco and I believe that it will encourage a culture of democracy in the country. It also

provided an opportunity for our fellow MPs across the world to get to know Morocco and appreciate the efforts that were made. I think it was positive for everyone.

***Q: Your country has taken steps to ensure that more women are involved in the political scene in Morocco...***

**A.R.:** The Government, concurring with His Majesty King Mohammed VI, has in fact decided to allot a certain number of seats to women. Therefore, there will be a list of women open to debate and a democratic vote to ensure the presence of at least 30 women in Parliament. Political parties may include women (on their electoral lists) and that is a very important step ahead for Morocco. Parties such as the USFP have decided to include women in their directorate. This proportion, which is already in force, should not be lower than 20%. Yet this measure should not mask the magnitude of the problem. It is not just a matter of making changes on the political arena. Efforts should also be made in the economic and social spheres to elevate the status of women in society. It is a beginning. We can definitely do better but we are on the right track.

## READ IN THE PRESS - READ IN THE PRESS - READ IN THE PRESS

MPs of some 130 countries, including Israel, will meet on Sunday in Marrakech to participate in the annual conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). This 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference will be inaugurated by King Mohamed VI and will deal mainly with "The role of national parliaments in globalisation" and "Parliamentary support for the Kyoto Protocol on the reduction of greenhouse gases". The Marrakech Conference will also be marked by strong Israeli attendance, led by the Speaker of the Knesset, Mr. Avraham Burg. This will be one of the first official visits of an Israeli delegation to a Muslim country since confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians resumed in October 2000.

Associated Press (AP) - 16 March 2002

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become one of the main topics of the IPU Conference underway in Marrakech since Sunday. The fact that the heads of the Palestinian and Israeli delegations met on Monday outside the official meeting under the auspices of the European delegations has accentuated this trend. The issue of the conflict was moreover tabled on the agenda as an emergency item on a proposal from the Moroccan delegation... In this way, IPU Members seek to contribute to the peace efforts in the hope of reaching a rapprochement based on international legitimacy, democratic values and universally recognised human rights.

Libération (Morocco) - 20 March 2002

### *Speakers firmly committed*

Once again, the Middle East is high on the agenda. The situation that has darkened the region in which the three monotheistic religions were born occupied the attention of the world's parliamentarians gathered in Marrakech for the 107<sup>th</sup> IPU Conference. The key question was: can parliamentarians help to stop the violence, both random and intentional, that continues to cause civilian deaths on both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides?

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and many Speakers of parliaments of the European Union (EU) believe they can. The Speaker of the Knesset asserted: "the situation is what it is, but I believe that if members of parliament do not try to change it they do not fulfil their mission. And therefore if we can help, we should". The Deputy-Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) Ibrahim Abu Al-Naja commented that: "parliamentarians might to some extent influence the decisions of their governments, but effectively it is the executive branch that has the final decision".

Aware of this twofold reality, the Committee on Middle East Questions, chaired by French MP Yves Tavernier, convened a meeting of the Israeli and Palestinian delegations in Marrakech, in the presence of the President of the Egyptian Parliament and two Jordanian delegates in order to continue to promote the dialogue which Knesset President Avraham Burg and PLC Speaker Ahmed Qorei "Abu Ala" started and have never interrupted despite the almost total absence of communication between their respective government leaders and the two peoples.

In order to support the political courage demonstrated by Avraham Burg and Ahmed Qorei, their European colleagues led by Raymond Forni, the Speaker of the French National Assembly, who was subsequently replaced by Pierferdinando Casini, Speaker of Italy's House of Representatives, decided to accompany their counterpart from the Knesset who had been invited by the PLC Speaker to go to Ramallah as soon as possible. In supporting the determination of Mr Burg and Mr Qorei and of the Israeli and Palestine parliamentarians who are continuing to talk to each other despite the violence, the IPU and the European Speakers of Parliaments are voicing a message of hope not only to the Israeli and Palestinian peoples but also to the Jewish, Muslim, Christian and other citizens who have been demonstrating for peace in several countries. "In Israel like in Palestine, there are men of peace who are driven by the same will and who share the same goal of living in peace in two separate States, because it is in their interest and in the interest of the international community at large" said Raymond Forni.

It is true that those words were said before the attack against Israeli citizens on the Jewish feast day of Pessah and before the Israeli army drove into the towns under Palestinian control and besieged the headquarters of the President of the Palestinian Authority who was isolated in Ramallah for one month, but the determination of the parliamentarians who spoke them is as strong as ever. As the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Morocco, who chaired the proceedings of the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference said "the only possible solution is a negotiated one". With this in mind, the IPU has once again expressed its readiness to organise a meeting between the Presidents of the Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council as soon as possible. ■

L.B.

### *Parliaments and the situation in the Middle East*

The situation in the Middle East dominated the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Marrakech. Apart from the resolution adopted by consensus, on a proposal from Morocco for an emergency supplementary item on "The role of parliaments in supporting implementation of resolution 1397 adopted by the United Nations Security Council on its attachment to a vision of a region in which two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognised borders", IPU's Committee on Middle East Questions also held a meeting in Marrakech. Presided over by French MP Yves Tavernier, the Committee met with an Israeli delegation led by the Speaker of the Knesset, Mr. Avraham Burg, and a Palestinian delegation headed by the Deputy-Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Mr. Ibrahim Abu Al-Naja. They were joined by the Speaker of the People's

Assembly of Egypt, Ahmed Fathi Sorour as well as two Jordanian delegates.

The Speaker of the French National Assembly, Raymond Forni, invited the Speakers of the various European parliaments in attendance at the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference to a breakfast meeting with the Speaker of the Knesset and the Deputy-Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Following the tragic events which took place after the 107<sup>th</sup> Conference in Marrakech, the Inter-Parliamentary Union is ready to organize a meeting between the Speaker of the Knesset, Mr. Avraham Burg, and the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), Mr. Ahmed Qorei "Abu Ala", under the auspices of the IPU Committee on Middle East Questions.

In a letter sent to both Presidents, the President of the IPU Council, Dr. Najma Heptulla, and the IPU Secretary





From left to right: Mr. Raymond Forni, Speaker of the French National Assembly, Mr. Avraham Burg, Speaker of the Knesset, Mr. Yves Tavernier, President of IPU Committee on Middle East Questions, Mr. Ahmed Fathi Sorour, Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament and Mr. Ibrahim Abu Al-Naja, Deputy-Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

### Mr. Raymond Forni, Speaker of the French National Assembly

*"MPs can change the course of events if they have the will to do so"*

**Q: What was the purpose of the meeting you organized in Marrakech?**

**Raymond Forni:** This informal breakfast meeting, at which Speakers of a few European Union Parliaments, a delegation from the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Speaker of the Knesset were present, was intended to formalise the commitment I made in Paris in January (see IPU Website [www.ipu.org/Quarterly Review The World of Parliaments](http://www.ipu.org/Quarterly%20Review%20The%20World%20of%20Parliaments), March issue) to accompany the Speaker of the Knesset, Avraham Burg, invited by the Speaker of the PLC, Ahmed Qorei "Abu Ala" to Ramallah to meet with the PLC in an effort to illustrate just how important this step towards peace is for European Parliaments. Since then, events have escalated and the Middle East situation has worsened to the point where there is a serious threat of widespread confrontation spilling over beyond the borders of these two countries. This step towards peace, in our view, is needed now more than ever. We will work with the Speakers who are present here, namely: Mr. Casini (Italian Chamber of Deputies) and the Speakers of the Parliaments of Luxembourg, Ireland and Belgium to try and make this visit happen very quickly. We were pleased to also have the Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament, Mr. Sorour, with us, and we know that the Speaker of the Moroccan House of Representatives, Mr. Radi, is also thinking along the same political lines. Mr. Sorour assured our group of Egypt's support. He urged us to come to Egypt as a further step towards a rapprochement of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. The situation is obviously a difficult one but I feel that no initiative along these lines should be overlooked. It became clear that our European parliaments, within the framework of parliamentary diplomacy, finally expressed themselves above and beyond the political differences which exist in Europe in an effort to underscore the will of Europeans to find a solution to the conflict in the Middle East. We all agree that it is impossible to remain in this state of perpetual escalation, in this bloodbath which plunges Israel and Palestine into mourning with each passing day. From all appearances, we need a solution other than military confrontation and we are pleased to state that in Palestine like in Israel, there are men of peace who are driven

General, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, stressed that a political dialogue at the highest level between the Israelis and Palestinians is today more necessary than ever. The IPU reiterates its commitment to facilitating this dialogue and recalled that the Committee on Middle East Questions has sought to promote such dialogue between the representatives elected by the people of the two sides over the last years. To this effect, it held a meeting at the National Assembly in Paris in June last year, and then visited the region. On that occasion, the Committee recommended that, under the auspices of the IPU, the Speakers of the Knesset and of the Palestinian Legislative Council meet to pursue this dialogue.

by the same will and who share the same goal, living in two separate States, because it is in their interest and in the interest of the international community at large.

**Q: Can MPs change the course of events in the Middle East?**

**R.F.:** MPs are politicians and politicians can always change the course of events provided that they have the will to do so.

**Q: In concrete terms, how will you follow-up your initiative? Will you travel to Ramallah?**

**R.F.:** I hope so! It is difficult to put things in place when you have to juggle the schedules of the Presidents of fifteen European national Parliaments. But we have the will to do it. The Israelis and Palestinians must also have the will for there has to be a convergence of will on three sides: the Israeli, the Palestinian and the European sides.

**Q: Did you get the impression in Marrakech that some sort of understanding had been reached between the Israelis and the Palestinians?**

**R.F.:** There was dialogue. That is the important thing. As long as the sides are in discussion, the situation is not beyond repair. We are not in a deadlock situation where there is no longer any exchange. The dialogue between the Israelis and the Palestinians, through us, is already a positive step to my mind. Abu Ala and Burg have this same will because they realise that, to put it very simply, the line of action adopted by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is not forward-looking, neither for Israel nor for Palestine. It is not by lining up corpses that the situation will be resolved because one would have to exterminate a whole nation and that is obviously impossible. Dialogue is the only solution.

### Mr Avraham Burg, Speaker of the Knesset

*"If members of Parliament do not try to change the situation they do not fulfil their mission"*

**Q: Mr. Speaker, you want to go to Ramallah. Why?**

**Avraham Burg:** The motivation is there for a long time and I think that the help of the European Parliaments and President Forni is very crucial, because we try now to crystallize the resolutions to be drafted by the group that will come

with us, which will be European Heads of Parliaments. I hope that all the fifteen or at least most of them [will come]. It is very important to have this conference in Morocco as the beginning of the end of the process.

**Q: Is the IPU going to be associated with this process ?**

**A.B.:** I hope so !

**Q: Can MPs change the situation ?**

**A.B.:** I don't know. The situation is what it is, but I believe that if members of Parliament do not try to change the situation they do not fulfil their mission. And therefore if we can help, we should help.

**Mr. Ibrahim Abu Al-Najah, Deputy-Speaker of the  
Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC)**

*"We will not leave any stone unturned  
in search for peace"*

**Q: What do you think of the initiative taken by the Speaker of the French National Assembly ?**

**Ibrahim Abu Al-Najah:** The French initiative is very useful, very courageous, because it seeks to achieve peace.

**Q: Do you think that the Speaker of the Knesset and the Speakers of the European Parliaments will be able to go to Ramallah to address the PLC ?**

**I.A.A.N.:** It is not a problem for us to receive Speaker Burg and the Speakers of the European Parliaments. The problem is with the Israeli government and Mr. Sharon, who is preventing Mr. Burg from taking this initiative.

**Q: Do you think that MPs can change the situation and help to restore dialogue among Israelis and Palestinians ?**

**I.A.A.N.:** To some extent they might influence the decisions of their governments, but effectively it is the executive branch that has the final decision.

**Q: During this meeting, did you have a chance to talk to Speaker Burg ?**

**I.A.A.N.:** This meeting was not intended to establish a direct bilateral dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis. They are meeting everywhere. They met in the streets of Balata refugee camps, in Kalandia check point, they are meeting in Marrakech. The idea is not the meeting itself, but the outcome of such a meeting. How does it serve the cause of peace? We hope it will. We will not leave any stone unturned in the search for peace. Whatever success there is will be a "plus" for us and for them. If it does not succeed we will try again.

**Mr. Ahmed Fathi Sorour,  
Speaker of the People's Assembly of Egypt:**

*"I appreciate the initiative to push for a  
meeting between Israelis and Palestinians"*

I appreciate Mr. Forni's initiative to push for a meeting between the Speaker of the Knesset and the President of the Palestinian Legislative Council. This initiative was accepted by both sides and the aim of today's meeting in Marrakech was to come up with ways of implementing this initiative. In principle, an agreement was reached to visit the Knesset and travel to Ramallah as well as to a statement on the peace process issued by both parties.

## *UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson calls for effective partnership with Parliaments*

In line with its action in defense of human rights, on 8th April 2002, the IPU organized in Geneva the first ever Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of a session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Modeled after the IPU Parliamentary Day which the IPU organizes regularly on the occasion of the UN General Assembly, the initiative was taken in response to an interest expressed by many parliamentarians to hear from UN officials and experts about human rights standards and mechanisms at the moment when the main UN body in this field, the Commission on Human Rights, is actually discussing these matters.

In his introductory statement to the meeting, which was attended by MPs from a dozen countries, the IPU Secretary General, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, expressed the hope that it would "become a springboard for increasing parliamentary involvement in the work of the Commission in the years to come". In her opening speech the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson, strongly advocated such involvement and stressed that "national parliaments are central to what goes on here. The entire purpose of the UN human rights program is to make a difference on the ground, in your countries, in your constituencies. We at the international level can achieve nothing unless you are involved in the same mission. To make real progress on these challenges we have to build effective practical partnerships between the international and national levels."

A basic outline of the structure and agenda of the Commission was presented as well as a civil society perspective on its functioning and on strengthening ties between non-governmental organizations and parliamentarians. The ensuing presentations by the UN Special Rapporteurs on freedom of expression and opinion, on the independence of the judiciary and on the right to education raised considerable interest and revealed the important role parliamentarians can play to support the work of special rapporteurs in general and ensure implementation of their recommendations.

While the meeting's limited size created an informal atmosphere which facilitated a direct exchange of ideas, it also revealed how much still remains to be done to have a parliamentary voice in the Commission and to ensure that its work and results are echoed in the activities of parliamentarians back home. The parliamentarians advocated holding such meetings on a regular basis because, in their view, they constitute a useful opportunity of making parliaments and their members increasingly acquainted with the work of the United Nations in the field of human rights. ■

# The IPU reinforces its cooperation with UN agencies

In Marrakech, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) strengthened its cooperation with the UN agencies. Participants at the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference heard the UN Secretary-General's message read by his representative, Mr. Ruud Lubbers, who is currently the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Mr Kofi Annan  
UN Secretary-General

*"The power of purse can make a real difference"*

"You meet on the eve of the Monterrey Conference, which aims to mobilise the resources so desperately needed for development. You gather as we seek to build on the decisions taken by the World Trade Organization last year at Doha, so that men and women in the developing world can compete on fair terms in the global market. And you come together as we look ahead to the Johannesburg Summit to restore momentum to the global quest for sustainable development..."

Parliamentarians are well placed to advance this entire agenda, and I hope you will do so – for example by committing funds, promoting investment, opening markets, removing unfair subsidies, and putting in place the policies and incentives that will encourage actions that are truly sustainable – economically, socially and environmentally. In our collective efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, your unique powers – including the power of the purse – can make a real difference..

I recommend that the General Assembly grant the IPU observer status. The majority of Member States share my views on this question and I hope that when the Assembly considers the matter, it will codify our relationship and usher in a new era in our already long-standing cooperation".

Mr Ruud Lubbers  
UN High Commissioner for Refugees

*"Refugees and asylum seekers might become convenient scapegoats"*

Mr Ruud Lubbers, UN High Commissioner for Refugees hopes that "lawmakers will encourage accession to the Refugee Convention and other instruments of refugee protection. I hope that you will also strive to ensure the adoption of appropriate national legislation for the protection of refugees, and that you will ensure its effective implementation.

"In the current climate there is a risk that refugees and asylum seekers might become convenient scapegoats. We must not allow this to happen. I count on the support of parliamentarians across the world in fighting xenophobia and intolerance in our societies, and in ensuring that refugees and asylum seekers receive the protection and assistance that they deserve".

The latest example of close IPU/UNHCR co-operation on refugee matters is the Handbook on International Refugee Law that we are jointly launching here today. It aims to help you, as Parliamentarians, to become familiar with the principles of international refugee law and its implementation, so that you can fully discharge your responsibilities.



Photo UN

Two MPs give their opinion on the Handbook published jointly by the IPU and the UNHCR and the recent incidents around the Sangatte refugee centre near Calais.

Mrs Ann Clwyd, United Kingdom

*"The Handbook is a good thing to remind MPs of their obligations to refugees"*

The UN policy on the treatment of refugees should be carried out by all member countries in Europe. Some countries are trying to push refugees into other countries, although they have obligations to give those refugees proper treatment in their own countries. It is not good enough and so I would remind them of the right of refugees as spelt out by the United Nations. The IPU Handbook done in conjunction with the UNCHR is a good thing to remind MPs in all the countries of the IPU what their obligations are to refugees. Unfortunately, too many refugees are not being processed properly, they are not given the in-depth interviews. It is essential that they are given in the country where they land and that they should not be sent back to countries which they may have left in the first place because their human rights have been abused.

Mr. Michel Vauzelle, France

*"MPs are essential guardians of human rights"*

It is very important to have a handbook such as the one published by IPU because MPs, except for those who are experts in international law or migratory flows, are a little bit disoriented or lack the basic tools needed for serious reflection. MPs are essentially guardians of human rights and are therefore given over to a generous, respectful attitude towards defending human rights and refugees in particular. Yet it is evident that at this point, we are dealing with problems that are worsening daily. Such a guide, which hones in on the issues and provides a number of technical details is very useful at this time. The Sangatte affair illustrates the disarray of governments and a lack of concerted action in dealing with these problems. In the meeting of IPU's Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM) over which I am presiding, I myself feel that the question of refugees is one of the issues (and this is no mean feat) which should be dealt with on a virtually ongoing basis by a commission or conference in order to achieve a convergence of views of the Mediterranean States in particular. The fact that the migratory flow to Great Britain, which is quite high, is not being handled in an appropriate manner by two powerful countries, two great civilisations where human rights are respected such as France and Great Britain, is absolutely unacceptable. The Sangatte affair has left us with a bitter aftertaste and, from now on, it is imperative for us to find a way of managing in an adequate manner what will inevitably occur in the passage across the Channel, particularly with the communications that exist.



Photo UNHCR



## Interview with UNESCO Director General, Mr Koïchiro Matsuura

*"It is preferable that journalists work out new codes of conduct rather than have government regulations imposed upon them"*

The Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Mr Koïchiro Matsuura, also addressed the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Marrakech. For the UNESCO Director-General "lawmakers and representatives have a vital role to play in improving intercultural dialogue in order to overcome the prejudices, misunderstandings and fears that bedevil relations between different cultural communities".

**Q: Do you think that the freedom of press is in danger after the 11 September events and the measures that countries may have taken to reinforce national security ?**

**Koïchiro Matsuura:** I believe strongly that freedom of the press must be honoured and respected. I further believe that the way journalists are to report and how they conduct themselves in times of heightened terrorist threats should be a matter of professional self-regulation. There is an undoubted tension between the exercise of basic freedoms and the need for greater security in the face of terrorism, but the whole point of any anti-terrorist campaign must be the security of our freedoms. For me, it is preferable by far that journalists themselves work out new codes of conduct rather than have government regulations imposed upon them. But it is definitely desirable to have a public airing of the whole issue. For this reason, UNESCO is organizing a symposium on press freedom and terrorism to coincide with this year's World Press Freedom Day early in May.



Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura,  
UNESCO Director general

Photo UNESCO

**Q: In a globalised world with new information technologies, do you think that we are better informed ?**

**K.M.:** By and large, I believe we are better informed, particularly in the developed countries where new information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become widely diffused. But we must not forget that there are millions of people across the world who have no access to the Internet, many of them, in fact, have no access to television or even the radio. The "digital divide" is a reality but there is a wider and deeper divide between the technologically rich and the technologically poor. We must try to close these gaps but this does not typically require that we take the very latest ICTs to the very poorest countries and communities. Assistance should be shaped by what is most appropriate to people's real needs and problems.

**Q: One of UNESCO's priorities is "education for all". What are the concrete steps you have reached so far in this field ? How can parliaments be instrumental in that respect ?**

**K. M.:** In order to achieve universal primary education, create equal learning opportunities for boys and girls, and reduce illiteracy, developing countries must step up their own efforts, not least by allocating increased budgetary resources to education, especially basic education. However, it was recognized that many developing countries need additional help (financial, material and technical) if they are to make real advances. The international community is seeking to generate the resources, especially but not only financial assistance, that will make a difference to country-level action. The active engagement of parliaments with the "education for all" challenge is particularly important in three areas. First, legislative support is needed to ensure that education receives higher budgetary allocations that are sustained over several years. This applies to the education budgets of developing countries as well as to the overseas aid budgets of developed countries. Second, the promotion of "education for all" within new educational legislation merits greater parliamentary attention and action. Third, MPs can make a big contribution by championing the cause of "education for all". It is vital that this cause at the national level rests securely on a broad base of popular support and also enjoys the backing of national leaders. If possible, a national consensus should be built around the priority of "education for all"; in this regard, MPs can do much by forging closer links between government, civil society, the private sector and professional groups.

# Panel on eliminating worst forms of child labour

At Marrakech, IPU and the International Labour Organization (ILO) also strengthened their cooperation by launching a handbook for parliamentarians on *"Eliminating the Worst Forms of Child Labour: A Practical Guide to ILO Convention No. 182"* and by organising a round table discussion on *"The worst forms of child labour"*. This round table was held under the patronage of Her Royal Highness, Princess Lalla Meryem, and was presided over by Mrs. Nezha Chekrouni, Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Vocational Training, Social Development and Solidarity with responsibility for the situation of women, the protection of the family and children and the integration of the physically challenged of Morocco.

## They said:

Mr Ahmed Akhchichine  
Moroccan National Observatory  
for Children's Rights

*"Firm commitment among government politicians and legislators is necessary"*

The combat to eradicate the worst forms of child labour as defined under Convention 182 concerns a particularly complex problem that affects almost all societies and which manifests itself differently from one environment to another. The responsibility falls on all those who have a deciding role in the international community, among whom parliamentarians, the representatives of peoples and nations, take pride of place. The role of parliamentarians in this endeavour cannot be reduced to mere legislative work of producing and adopting laws. To eradicate the worst forms of child labour, conditions must be set up so that public opinion expresses itself strongly on the subject at the international and national levels. Political will power and firm commitment among government politicians and legislators are also necessary. The members of civil society must also be involved, especially those who are most directly concerned by labour issues - the trade unions and the employers' organisations. Parliaments work together at the international level to ensure that the expectations of the countries and societies that have committed themselves to this struggle do not remain unanswered, and that mechanisms for assistance and partnership focussing on these development questions also make the problem of the eradication of the worst forms of child labour a priority concern.



From left to right: Ms. Christine Pintat, Assistant Secretary-General of IPU, Mrs. Najma Heptulla, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, Mr. Abdelwahed Radi, President of the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference, Mrs. Nezha Chekrouni, Moroccan Minister in charge of the Advancement of Women, the Protection of the Family and Children and the Integration of Handicapped Persons and Mr. Frans Roselaers, Director of ILO's IPEC Programme.

Photo : IPU/Moroccan Parliament

Mrs Beth Mugo, MP, Kenya  
President of the IPU Committee  
on parliamentary, juridical and  
human rights questions

*"It is essential to promote transition of working children from work to school"*

Parliamentarians have a crucial role to play as they have the capacity to influence policies of their governments. The programmes also call for commitment of substantial public funds which parliamentarians have to vote for in the national budget. At the social scene, retrogressive cultural practices which promote pre-determined discriminative gender roles should be outlawed and the society educated to discard them through public awareness campaigns. In addition to this, complementary policies and strategies to promote transition of working children from work to school are needed.

Mrs Yoko Kamikawa, MP, Japan

*"It is also important to create a realistic environment for children"*

The IPU should urge governments to conduct thorough investigations and to make the results public on child labour. It is also important to create a realistic environment for children in accordance with their actual circumstances; responsible action by the governments of all the countries concerned is essential. The IPU must promote the formulation and realisation of action plans by supporting the efforts of these countries from the sidelines. The IPU should continuously pursue this issue and give the widest possible publicity to our efforts and achievements.



## Interview with Mrs Nezha Chekrouni, Moroccan Minister in charge of the Advancement of Women, the Protection of the Family and Children and the Integration of Handicapped Persons

*"The taboos have to be dispelled, particularly the sexual exploitation of children"*

**Q: What were the objectives of this round table discussion?**

**Nezha Chekrouni:** The objective was to identify the worst forms of child labour and define the various dimensions of this problem which is not only linked to the whole issue of children but also falls under a global and family umbrella concerning poverty and the status of women. Yesterday the point was made that in some families, children worked to enable their parents to break free of the spiral of poverty. Yet today it appears that child labour only serves to perpetuate poverty. It is a vicious circle which must be broken and the only way to do so is to eradicate the worst forms of child labour.

**Q: How?**

**N.C.:** A number of recommendations have been made with a view to forming alliances, for we believe that concerted action among the various actors and partners in society can in fact resolve this problem. Such action would be based on partnership among MPs, governments, and non-governmental organizations at the national level, and international organisations. It requires the establishment of a legislative mechanism capable of defending and protecting children as well as monitoring and implementing legal measures. Investments must also be made in education and there should be preventive and remedial measures which are adequate for dealing with the full reality of the situation. Education is the key to resolving this problem and all other problems involving children. It is therefore crucial to have a broad-based education system with a curriculum based on the rights of the child in order to secure the future of our countries, a future built on human potential capable of taking up the challenges at hand. And tomorrow's human potential is embodied in today's children. Young girls should also be given priority.

**Q: Should the laws provide for more stringent measures in cases of abuse?**

**N.C.:** First of all, reliable studies should be conducted to get a true picture of the reality of the situation. Similarly, the taboos attached to this issue have to be dispelled, particularly regarding the issue of sexual exploitation. We did this in Morocco within the framework of the African-Arab Forum which we organised last June. The silence has to be broken and laws must be passed but, above all, there has to be an awareness among all the social actors in order to work together. Parents must be involved in this issue because without the involvement of families and children themselves, the work cannot be accomplished. Social ills are closely linked to poverty, but poverty is not only economic or financial. It is also cultural. These facets are indissociable. We are faced with a chain in which all the links are important.

## At Marrakech, Mrs Gwen Mahlangu, a Member of the National Assembly of South Africa, was elected President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians. Interview.

*"What I like about the Coordinating Committee and the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians is that most of the issues that were never addressed are now touched upon and it is making a difference"*

**Q: What is your objective as President of the Coordination Committee of the Women MPs of the IPU?**

**Gwen Mahlangu:** Women MPs can do a lot of things. The world is facing many problems. Take the example of terrorism, the most topical issue at the present moment which occurs anywhere in the world. As mothers, and as people who remain with families, we have to make sure that our world becomes a peaceful world. Unfortunately, we have very few meetings in our two-year term in the Coordinating Committee, but we will try by all means to keep in touch to make sure that we make women's issues more topical, that we unite our continents and that we find ways of making sure we support and give solidarity to our sisters who are in worse situations than ourselves.

**Q: Do you advocate a conference on female genital mutilation as a follow-up to the panel organised by the IPU and the Parliament of Burkina Faso in Ouagadougou?**

**G.M.:** Yes. The African leadership at the IPU, together with the IPU has agreed to host a conference this year. As Coordinating Committee, we will be working very closely with them, as we did in Ouagadougou (see IPU Quarterly Review *The World of Parliament*, November 2001 issue, on the Web site [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org)). We want to have an ongoing debate. We have recommended that national groups also put this as a topic for discussion, so that we can have resolutions coming from different countries.

**Q: Do you think that the motion that was adopted here in favour of Mrs Safya Hussaini could help her situation?**

**G.M.:** If the whole world of parliamentarians who are public representatives are requesting that she should be pardoned, we expect her to be pardoned. And we expect that such sentences, in future, are done away with. Because they are not only barbaric, they are against human life. That is an abuse of human rights and women in positions like ours should always be able to find solidarity amongst us. And we are very proud that the motion was raised by Belgium on behalf of the developing countries and it was well received by the Nigerian delegation.

**Q: Do you think that men MPs could participate more in the debate of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians?**

**G.M.:** I think that dialogue among men and women is very good, because in most cases we think for them and when they are there and they speak, they make a difference. Mr. Farouk Cassim from South Africa is a very good example. He participated in Ouagadougou in the Panel on female genital mutilation and made an excellent contribution. As well as Mr. Fall from Senegal. We are asking these few gentlemen to make sure that other men are brought on board. We are going to have a very dynamic discussion in Chile [ where the 108th Inter-Parliamentary Conference will take place in April 2002 ] on our contribution as women to the economies of the world because that is also a good contribution that is never spoken about. Our role is not only to make food in the kitchen, and so on. We contribute to the economy and we want a discussion between men and women about this. Why are men silent about it? Why can't they give us the recognition we deserve?

**Q: During the 108<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Santiago (Chile) you are going to organise a panel on trafficking in young girls. Can you elaborate on that initiative?**

**G. M.:** Girl trafficking is a problem in the whole world. When we spoke about it in the Coordinating Committee no country was against it because they know what it means. We think that children are not physically ready for the exercises the men put them through and we feel that no one should be allowed to traffick with human beings, let alone children, and we want to go further and declare a decade for the protection of the girl child from 2003 to 2013. This point was put to the Coordinating Committee and it was well received. What I like about the Coordinating Committee and the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians is that most of the issues that were never addressed are now touched upon, and it is making a difference.

<sup>1</sup> The Islamic Appeals Court of the Nigerian State of Sokoto has since acquitted Safiya Hussaini, who had been sentenced in the first instance by an Islamic court to death by stoning for the offence of adultery.

### *Eradication of FGM*

During the 107<sup>th</sup> IPU Conference in Marrakech, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the African Parliamentary Union invited men and women MPs from those countries where female genital mutilation is still entrenched, as well as from countries of emigration for nationals of these countries to a session on legislation, programmes and good practices to be promoted in response to this complex phenomenon and on the ways to reinforce cooperation between their respective countries. The session was a follow-up to the panel held in Ouagadougou in September 2001 (see *The World of Parliaments/Quarterly Review* N°5). Participants agreed to work towards a possible convention on the eradication of FGM and asked the IPU and the APU to organize a parliamentary conference. A group formed by the following parliamentarians was established to coordinate preparations for that event, which should bring together MPs, religious and traditional leaders, NGOs and former practitioners of FGM: Ms. Karin Andersen (Norway), Mr. Elias Bare Shill (Kenya), Mr. Abdou Fall (Senegal), Ms. Rebecca Kadaga (Uganda), Ms. Gwadabe Khairat Abdul-Razaq (Nigeria) and Ms. Marion Roe (United Kingdom). (See IPU web site: [www.ipu.org/What's new at this site/Stop violence against women](http://www.ipu.org/What's_new_at_this_site/Stop_violence_against_women)).

### *FLASH - FLASH - FLASH*

#### *IPU supports adoption of the East Timor Constitution*

The 663 MPs from 126 countries present in Marrakech for the 107<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference and the Council (governing body) of the IPU sent a message congratulating the East Timor Constituent Assembly for the adoption of the Constitution of East Timor. "The world parliamentary community represented by the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been following political events as they unfold in East Timor and watching with keen interest the framing process of its Constitution, which has been carried out under tight time constraints".

The Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union took note "with satisfaction of the adoption by the Constituent Assembly of the first Constitution of East Timor, thus paving the way for the independence of that territory.

On this historic occasion, the Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union extends its congratulations to the members of the Constituent Assembly and to the people of East Timor. It renews its commitment to continue to provide support to the Constituent Assembly and future Parliament of a sovereign and independent state, with a view to fostering representative democracy in East Timor. The Inter-Parliamentary Union looks forward to welcoming, in due course, the new Parliament of East Timor within its fold".

### *IN MEMORIAM*

Over the past month, two eminent parliamentarians have passed away. They are : Mr. Spyros Kyprianou, former President of the Republic of Cyprus and Speaker of Parliament, and Mr. G.C.M. Balayogi, Speaker of the Lok Sabha of India. The President of the IPU Council, Dr. Najma Heptulla, and the IPU Secretary General, Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, have offered the condolences of the IPU to the respective parliaments.

The IPU has also learnt the sad news of the death of Jean Pouillon who was in charge of the précis-writing team at the Inter-Parliamentary conferences for several decades. The IPU Secretary General has sent the IPU's condolences to the family and former colleagues of Mr Jean Pouillon.

# Parliamentary Developments

## Belgium

On 21 February 2002, two amendments to the Constitution were adopted. A new paragraph was included in Article 10, with a view to guaranteeing the principle of equal access to elected office for men and women alike.

On 29 November 2001, the House of Representatives adopted an amendment to its Standing Orders, according to which the duty of representing the House shall devolve upon members who enjoy broad support in that body. However, with a view to reflecting the composition of the assembly, members of groups viewed as important shall be associated with the work of the Bureau of the House. Likewise, two key changes were made to the Senate's Rules of Procedure: committee meetings will henceforth be open to the public, whereas *in camera* meetings were the rule in the past, and speaking time for oral questions has been limited: in the future, the author of the question and the minister fielding the question will have three minutes each.

## Canada

On 15 June 2001, the Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act came into force. The bill has two basic objectives: to address a decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal regarding the identification of the political affiliation of candidates on election ballots, and to make a number of technical and administrative changes and correct certain drafting errors in the new *Canada Elections Act*, which was passed in 2000. In December 2001, the Senate adopted new rules with respect to Senators indicted and subject to judicial proceedings. An indicted Senator is given a leave of absence with respect to attendance in the chamber and in committees. Should there be a termination of the judicial process without conviction, then the Senator is automatically restored to full rights of participation in his or her legislative role. In the event of a conviction, the Senator remains in office until all appeals have been exhausted, but is suspended from the service without pay. If the conviction is subsequently set aside, the Senator is returned to the full role of a Senator and the pay that was withheld is restored in full, without interest.

## Denmark

The Standing Orders were amended to establish new rules concerning the conditions for approval of parliamentary groups entitled to parliamentary rights and benefits. According to these new rules, this approval depends on such groups' compliance with one of the following:

- Group of Members elected in the latest parliamentary elections as representatives of a certain political party which they still represent;
- Group of Members who establish a new group and a new political party which is entitled to nomination for parliamentary elections;
- Group of Members who join an existing political party which is not represented in the Folketing but is entitled to nomination for parliamentary elections;

- Group of Members who are no longer members of the party for which they were elected but who continue as a collective body with a shared policy.

## Hungary

The Constitution was amended in line with the changes in the structure of the top-level leadership of the Hungarian Army. The amending Law regulates the composition of the Council of Defence and stipulates that the basic rules regarding control of the armed forces and the order of the top-level leadership of the Hungarian Army shall be determined under a statute approved by two-thirds of the MPs present at the sitting called to consider the matter.

## India

On 5 December 2001, a change to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha came into force. The new rule provides for the automatic suspension of members who come to the well of the House and create disorder. On being named by the Speaker, such members would be automatically suspended from the service of the House for five consecutive sittings or the remainder of the Session, whichever is less.

Also enacted was the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Act, which enhances the salary of the members, the allowance payable to the members during any period of residence and the rate of road mileage in respect of every journey performed in India for the purpose of attending any business connected with the duties as a member.

## Ireland

On 27 February 2002, the Standing Orders were amended to provide for the taking of votes electronically and to cater for situations where the electronic system is unavailable or unreliable, wherein the Speaker may at any time require that a vote be re-taken electronically or taken manually. The amended Standing Orders also provide that votes on the election of the Speaker, nomination of the Prime Minister and members of the Government, and motions of confidence in the Government will be taken manually.

## New Zealand

On 22 December 2001, the Electoral (Integrity) Amendment Act became law. It stipulates that if a member of Parliament resigns or is expelled from his or her parliamentary party, the member automatically loses office as a member of parliament. A member can be expelled from a party only if the parliamentary leader of that party delivers written notice to that effect to the Speaker and can only be expelled on the grounds that he or she has acted in a way that has distorted the proportionality of political party representation in Parliament. The leader must give the member 21 working days' notice of intention to take action and the decision to expel the member must be supported by at least two-thirds of the parliamentary members of that party.



## Poland

Four amendments to the Standing Orders were adopted between 19 October 2001 and 14 February 2002. The first amendment introduced substantial changes into the system of permanent committees in the Sejm. Some were established, others replaced and five dissolved. The second amendment raised the maximum number of members of the Special Services Committee from seven to nine. The third amendment changed the procedures for appointment of members of the Deputies' Ethics Committee. The last amendment introduced the possibility to reject a bill in its second reading, which is a real innovation for the Polish system of legislative procedure.

The Act of 9 May 1996 on the Exercise of the Mandate of a Deputy or Senator was amended on 24 August 2001. The changes concern the principles of recruitment of staff to assist Deputies and Senators and service parliamentary clubs (caucuses) and groups. Detailed provisions specifying the procedure for financial statements by Deputies and Senators were also adopted.

## Republic of Korea

The Election Law has been amended regarding financial deposits required of candidates in parliamentary elections. The ceiling on these deposits has been reduced to 15,000,000 won (some 11,500 US dollars) from 20,000,000 won. Changes have also been introduced with regard to the repayment of these deposits, which must be returned in the following cases: when the candidate is elected; upon the death of the candidate; if the number of candidate's obtained votes exceeds the number of valid votes divided by the total number of candidates running or if the number of votes is more than 15/100 of the valid votes. Another amendment establishes that by-elections do not have to be held if the remaining parliamentary term is less than one year from the date on which the by-election is to be held.

## RWANDA

The Law on the means available to the Transition National Assembly for collecting information on government action and overseeing such measures has been amended. The changes concern, *inter alia*, the deadline for a reply by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers or Secretaries of State, which has been extended from 15 to 30 days. Another new element is the possibility for the Assembly to debate questions of general interest with the government within the framework of an exchange of ideas.

## SOUTH AFRICA

On 21 November 2001, the Constitution was amended to make provision for, among other things, the appointment of not more than two Deputy Ministers from outside the National Assembly. Before this amendment, the Constitution provided that Deputy Ministers should be appointed from among the members of the National Assembly only.

On 14 December 2001, the Constitution was also amended to extend and adjust the definition of a money bill, among other things, and to specify that only the Minister of Finance may introduce a money bill. The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that the National Treasury is able, before introduction, to assess all legislation having an impact on macro-economic policy or relating to national taxes or direct charges against the National Revenue Fund.

## Sweden

In September 2001, the Riksdag Act was amended with regard to the Government's obligation to account for its actions in the European Union. Moreover, a new paragraph has been added to the Riksdag Act, which states that the committees are to follow up and evaluate decisions connected to their own area of responsibility.

The Electoral Law has been also amended to enable Swedish voters abroad to vote by mail, by sending their voting slips to the Election Authority in Sweden.

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