



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER TO THE UNITED NATIONS

S T A T E M E N T

**by Ambassador Anda Filip, IPU Permanent Observer
Second informal open meeting on the Revitalization of the work of the
General Assembly**

New York, 19 June 2007

Distinguished co-Chairs,

I wish to thank you for convening this meeting and for the valuable work you have carried out over these past months. We very much appreciated the opportunity to meet with both of you, as well as with other representatives of member States, to discuss the type of contribution the Inter-Parliamentary Union – as the world organization of national parliaments – can bring to the strengthening of the General Assembly.

Evidently, the IPU strongly supports your efforts. Given the momentum of the UN reform process and building on the draft document you have prepared and circulated on June 6th – we feel there is now a good window of opportunity that can help bring the process forward.

The IPU had the opportunity to share its views with the members of the General Assembly during an informal session on GA revitalization held last year in April. We started from the premise that the General Assembly – also coined the legislative body of the United Nations – was established more than sixty years ago to be the main deliberative, policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations. When established, it drew inspiration from parliamentary practice at the time. Since then, the General Assembly has evolved and so have parliaments.

Over the years, parliaments in both developed and developing countries have modernized their structures and working methods to make them more accessible to citizens and others who can contribute to parliamentary work, improve the effectiveness of committees, streamline the legislative agenda, improve voting systems, and ensure greater accountability of office holders. Many parliaments have been successful in this endeavor.

The IPU believes that these parliamentary experiences could be of value to the General Assembly when one considers how best to improve on its structures and working methods. In consultation with you and the President of the General Assembly, the IPU would be pleased to convene a group of leading legislators to informally share their ideas and good practices. As in the case of parliaments, the main challenge for the General Assembly is to develop mechanisms and practices so as to ensure that it is indeed a representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective body.

There has also been quite a bit of discussion in this room about how implementation of GA Resolutions is a key component in strengthening the role and authority of the General Assembly, with the observation that as long as these resolutions remain primarily on paper and are not effectively acted upon, the credibility of the GA will continue to suffer.

Here we come to the question of political will. As we've said on past occasions, we are convinced that members of parliament can play an extraordinarily important role in building political support for international action. In IPU's view, which is shared by many UN Member States, the United Nations stands to gain considerably by making sure that parliaments and their members have a good and undistorted understanding of major processes and activities under way at the United Nations. The more members of parliament are aware of the deliberations and negotiations taking place at the United Nations and of their outcome, including the resolutions adopted by the GA, the more they are likely to engage in their implementation. In other words, associating members of parliaments more closely with the United Nations – basically helping to mainstream UN issues into their own parliamentary agenda back home - will lead to the more active involvement by parliaments in ratifying intergovernmental agreements, adopting or amending legislation, translating international commitments into concrete action at the national level, voting budgets and holding governments to account.

Based on this common understanding, it was possible last fall for the General Assembly to adopt by consensus a bold, innovative and forward-looking resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and IPU (RES 61/6). On their part, in order to facilitate the implementation of that Resolution, the Governing Bodies of the IPU endorsed the establishment of a global parliamentary committee on UN affairs. The Committee, whose work will be advised by a select group of prominent legislators (to include Speakers of Parliament, chairpersons of Foreign Affairs Committees, even former Presidents of the GA) will hold a broad mandate and will seek to give enhanced political guidance, substance and sustainability to cooperation between the two organizations. As part of its mandate, the Committee will be called upon to develop a more robust parliamentary contribution to the whole question of revitalization of the GA. As envisaged by Resolution 61/6, it will also aim to provide input for the elaboration of system-wide strategies for consideration by the United Nations System, with a view to ensuring greater and more coherent support by parliaments to the work of the United Nations.

Because of these new developments, we feel that the reference in paragraph 9 to cooperation with IPU and national and regional parliaments should remain in the text under consideration, but perhaps in a modified and up-dated form. As I've mentioned - there is already a solid and agreed basis on which we can build and it would be useful to try to define the practical modalities of this cooperation between the two organizations. For example, reference can be made to how the Joint annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations can be better integrated into the agenda of the General Assembly. This would not carry any financial implications for the UN, but it would provide greater clarity on how the agenda of this joint UN-IPU event is shaped so as to maximize its support and contribution to the UN. The Hearing should serve as a political sounding board for the General Assembly on some of the key issues that it deals with. The conclusions of the Hearing would therefore bring a consultative contribution to the work of the GA, while at the same being submitted for consideration and action by parliaments at the national level.

We have approached the office of the President of the General Assembly in this regard, and feel it would also be useful to acknowledge these recent developments in the draft document on the strengthening of the General Assembly.

In conclusion, let me just mention that a first meeting of the Advisory Group of the new global parliamentary Committee on UN Affairs is scheduled to take place in Geneva, in mid-July. Revitalization of the General Assembly will be one of the items figuring on the agenda, and we will certainly come back to you with the outcome of these preliminary deliberations. In the meantime, any views, proposals or requests you may wish to share would, I am sure, be most welcome.

Thank you for your attention.