



INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Report on the Peacebuilding Commission [10]

STATEMENT by Speaker Theo-Ben Gurirab, President of the IPU

United Nations General Assembly, 20 November 2009

Mr. President,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Mr. President and dear brother,

I would be remiss if I did not, on this happy occasion, tell you how very pleased I am to see you in the seat I once occupied at the turn of the century. The IPU is at your service to be helpful. I wish you well.

I am pleased to be back in this august Assembly and to address you on behalf of the Inter-Parliamentary Union as you review the work of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC).

The promotion of peace lies at the heart of the mandate of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Our organization is founded on the notion that parliaments and their members have an essential contribution to make in building peace and social stability.

It is in parliament where the competing and sometimes conflicting interests in society are debated. It is where agreements are forged on public policy and national priorities. A fully representative parliament that has the requisite powers to legislate and hold government to account is, in many ways, the best antidote to conflict.

As a melting pot of the diverse components of society, parliament has a determining role in the process of national reconciliation, political tolerance and peace building in the aftermath of conflict.

Despite undeniable progress made over the last couple of decades, many parliaments in developing countries and particularly those in post conflict countries continue to face daunting challenges. They have far too limited capacity and resources to be able to function effectively and promote democracy.

We are working in the IPU to assist these parliaments, to give them sustained and practical support and thereby assist in their long-term development into more credible institutions: institutions that can help build consensus and serve as a platform for open and frank debate which can also contribute to healing the scars of conflict and averting the danger of a return to instability and discord.

We are working closely with the United Nations in the field of conflict resolution. We have a shared interest in seeing vibrant parliaments take root. They are essential to achieving local ownership which is critical to the success of international operations in post-conflict societies.

I am pleased that the Peacebuilding Commission is paying increasing attention to the needs of parliaments in embattled countries where it is working. I warmly welcome the growing cooperation between the IPU and the Peacebuilding Commission.

In our experience, in order for parliaments in countries emerging from conflict to function effectively, dialogue is absolutely indispensable. This holds true for the majority and opposition parties alike to be able to work together. In this way they will be able to form a common vision based on shared confidence and mutual respect.

For this reason, the IPU is engaged in a long-term effort to help the Parliament in Burundi create a framework for on-going dialogue, consensus-building and inclusive decision-making.

Similarly, we are helping the Parliament of Sierra Leone play a robust role in the process of national reconciliation and a new beginning. Currently, we assist in the development of a code regulating the opposition in parliament and encourage parliamentarians on both sides of the political divide to work together for the common good.

In Kenya, we are working with the Parliament to ensure that it is at the forefront of efforts being made to ensure long-term stability and development to that country. We have facilitated the finalization by parliament of an action plan to implement the overall political agreement. Furthermore, we are now accompanying the parliament as it implements the plan through all stages.

Moreover, we are in discussions with the Peacebuilding Commission and the parliament in the Central African Republic. Early next month, we will conduct a mission to that country in the context of a PBC mission, with a view to assessing the Parliament's needs and devising a strategy for supporting its long-term development and consolidation efforts.

Mr. President,

As we debate how best to bring peace and stability to countries affected by conflict, we must remember that this can not be achieved without goodwill and reconciliation. And such efforts must be a home grown affair in all respects. It requires the participation of all and that means necessarily the participation of parliament.

Let me therefore end by urging all of you to give your full support to the parliaments in these countries, respecting their sovereignty while giving them the means to become truly representative, transparent, accountable, accessible and effective institutions. That is one of the most vital investments the international community can make to building peace and reconstruction.

This is one of the important contributions we in the IPU are making to peace and development in a growing number of countries and I urge you to join us in this exercise in building a better common future.

I thank you.