



COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

This document provides a brief checklist of activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations system from 14 April to 15 October 2011.

United Nations

- The IPU made statements at and contributed to several regular UN meetings and special conferences. Topics included the least developed countries, HIV/AIDS, discrimination against women and non-communicable diseases. The resolutions of the 124th IPU Assembly were circulated at the 66th session of the General Assembly (beginning in September) under the relevant agenda items.
- A first round of informal consultations with UN officials and Member States has begun to pave the way for a debate at the General Assembly on *Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union*. The debate will take place in spring 2012 and will conclude with a formal resolution. It will build on the achievements of previous resolutions and seek to identify means of further enhancing the relationship between the two organizations on both the political and operational levels.
- Preparations for the annual joint Parliamentary Hearing got underway in cooperation with the new President of the General Assembly, Mr. N.A. Al-Nasser of Qatar. The Hearing will take place at UN Headquarters in New York on 28 and 29 November under the overall theme of *Strengthening political accountability for a more peaceful and prosperous world*. Among other things, the agenda will address the role of the United Nations in promoting global accountability, the links between national institutions and civil society, budget transparency and the fight against corruption, and youth participation in the democratic process.
- The IPU Advisory Group of the Committee on United Nations Affairs undertook a week-long mission to Sierra Leone and Ghana in early June. Members of the Advisory Group sought to gauge progress in the consolidation of integrated UN field operations (known as "One UN" reform), and to examine parliamentary involvement in the process. One UN is part of broader efforts to enhance system-wide coherence in the work of the United Nations in order to make the organization more efficient. The mission's report will be circulated to the relevant UN bodies and will underscore the importance of involving parliaments in UN processes at the country level.

- A Parliamentary Briefing was held on 21 September in cooperation with the President of the General Assembly on the main theme of the opening debate of the General Assembly: *The role of mediation in the settlement of disputes by peaceful means*. The briefing catered to members of parliament participating in the opening segment of the General Assembly, which also saw thematic debates on non-communicable diseases, nuclear energy safety, desertification and racism.
- Preparations for a Parliamentary Meeting to be held in conjunction with the forthcoming session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP17/CMP7) got underway. The parliamentary event, to be co-organized by the IPU and the South African Parliament, will be held on 5 December 2011 on the premises of world-famous Moses Mabhida Stadium in Durban, South Africa. The outcome document of the Parliamentary Meeting will be conveyed to the Chairperson of the UN Conference.
- The first High-Level Symposium of the 2012 Development Cooperation Forum was held in Mali on 5 and 6 May. The IPU contributed substantively to the agenda of the meeting and helped facilitate the participation of parliamentarians as one of the main stakeholder groups. Preparations are underway for the second symposium, which will take place in Luxembourg in mid-October and focus on understanding the catalytic role of aid. The overall process will help enhance the parliamentary dimension of the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness that will take place in Busan, Republic of Korea, in late November.
- On 8 May, 200 MPs from 55 countries participated in a Parliamentary Forum organized by the IPU and the Grand National Assembly of Turkey under the aegis of the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (OHRLLS) on the occasion of the Fourth United Nations Conference for the Least Developed Countries (LDC-IV). The outcome document of the UN Conference - the Istanbul Programme of Action - contains important new commitments on the role of parliaments. A follow-up joint project between the IPU and OHRLLS was launched along with a fund-raising effort for the project.
- The Parliamentary Forum on *The Triple Challenge of Cyber-Security: Information, Citizens and Infrastructure* was held from 18 to 20 May in Geneva, organized within the framework of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. The Forum was part of the ongoing dialogue in the run-up to the World Summit on the Information Society follow-up conference in 2015. It addressed the particular challenges posed by the illicit use of information and communication technologies.
- The IPU reported to the 49th session of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in July 2011 on IPU activities and parliamentary involvement in the reporting process on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Recent technical assistance provided by the IPU to parliaments on gender equality includes continued consultations with the parliaments of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Rwanda and Togo in support of legislative reform, including in the area of combating violence against women. Four of the eight countries under review by the CEDAW Committee at its 49th session reported some form of parliamentary involvement in the national review process.

- The IPU participated in a series of roundtables convened by the UN Department of Political Affairs and International IDEA on the promotion of democracy, and contributed to the sessions devoted to gender equality and democracy (May 2011) and human rights and democracy (July 2011). The outcome of these roundtables will serve as a basis for new UN guidelines and recommendations on the promotion of democracy worldwide.
- In the wings of the 124th IPU Assembly in Panama City, the IPU, in collaboration with the Every Woman Every Child Campaign and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, jointly organized a roundtable entitled *Parliamentarians taking the lead on maternal, newborn and child health*. The discussion underscored what parliaments were required to do in the areas of legislative reform, budget-setting and monitoring, advocacy and oversight, highlighting issues and challenges that need to be addressed in order to successfully promote women's and children's health.
- As part of the global campaign to achieve the health-related MDGs and in support of the Global Strategy on Women's and Children's Health launched by the UN Secretary-General, the IPU announced its commitment to the Global Strategy in July 2011. This commitment will involve mobilizing support for the Global Strategy within the world parliamentary community, as well as providing targeted assistance to parliaments with a view to enhancing their legislative and oversight functions in the area of child and maternal health.

UNDP

- Work advanced during this period on the first ever IPU-UNDP *Global Parliamentary Report*, to be issued in 2012, focusing on the relationship between parliaments and citizens. Hundreds of parliamentarians are being interviewed to support the primary research for the report.
- The IPU continued implementing the activities identified in the memoranda of understanding with UNDP-Democratic Republic of the Congo and UNDP-Guinea-Bissau. In Guinea-Bissau, the IPU and UNDP co-organized a seminar on parliamentary oversight, with a special emphasis on budget oversight and oversight of the security and energy sectors. In September, they also co-organized an audit of the parliamentary administration. In October, the IPU and UNDP-DR Congo, held a professional training session in Kinshasa on the recording of parliamentary proceedings from 4 to 14 October 2011 following a technical assessment of the parliament's debate transcription capacities.
- The IPU and UNDP-Central African Republic, in cooperation with the UN Peacebuilding Commission, organized in Bangui an orientation seminar for the newly elected members of parliament from 6 to 12 October 2011. This activity is part of the recommendations contained in the IPU needs assessment report issued in early 2010.
- The IPU and UNDP have signed an agreement to jointly implement a €1.4 million project funded by the European Union intended to strengthen the Secretariat of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC). The project will assist the PLC Secretariat in preparing for the resumption of parliamentary work by addressing procedural, legislative and administrative shortcomings.
- From 17 to 19 May, the IPU, UNDP-Jordan and the Jordanian House of Representatives held a session on gender equality and women's rights for Jordanian parliamentarians. The event focused on achievements and remaining challenges in implementing CEDAW in Jordan.

UN WOMEN

- Further to the participation by UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet in the 124th IPU Assembly in Panama City, a mechanism of regular consultations was instituted between the IPU and UN Women to identify and carry forward opportunities for joint action.
- In June, the IPU, UN WOMEN, the Government of Egypt, UNDP, International IDEA, iKNOW Politics and the Swedish Institute organized a Roundtable in Cairo entitled *Pathways for women in democratic transitions: International experiences and lessons learned*. The Roundtable explored paths towards democratic transition, good governance, gender equality and social justice. Discussions were also held on the electoral law and women's representation.

UNICEF

- The IPU and UNICEF organized a regional seminar for parliaments of the CEE-CIS region on *Making child rights a reality for the most vulnerable children*. The seminar was hosted by the National Assembly of Armenia in Yerevan (14-16 June). It provided an introduction to the international regime of children's rights and how it has been applied in the region. Special focus was placed on violence against children.

OHCHR

- The IPU took part in the 12th session of the Inter-Committee Meeting of the human rights treaty bodies, held from 27 to 29 June in Geneva. The purpose of the meeting was for the committees to adopt a coordinated approach with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of the treaty bodies. The IPU presented an overview of the assistance it provided to its Members in terms of strengthening their capacities to promote human rights through close involvement in the work of the various UN human rights mechanisms. The Inter-Committee members commended the IPU for its contribution and called for greater collaboration between the world organization of parliaments and OHCHR.

UNAIDS

- A Parliamentary Briefing co-organized with UNAIDS was held at UN Headquarters in June, on the occasion the UN High-level Meeting to review progress on the implementation of the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. Some 80 MPs attended and participated in other side events of the main UN meeting. Much of the discussion focused on the question of discriminatory laws that impede full access to prevention and treatment by those most at risk of the disease. The outcome document of the UN conference acknowledged the important role of parliaments in setting the legislative framework for an effective response to HIV/AIDS.
- The IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS was enlarged and held a strategic meeting in June, at which UNAIDS and UNDP representatives were invited to participate in an advisory capacity. Discussions with these agencies on possible support to the work of the Advisory Group and the IPU in general are ongoing.
- The IPU continued to support the consultations of the Global Commission on HIV and the Law by ensuring the involvement of MPs in the various regions. The Commission's most recent public debate was held in Oakland, USA, in mid-September. Its final report is expected by the end of the year.

UNCBD

- Negotiations are currently underway between the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) and the IPU with a view to signing a Memorandum of Understanding. Following the conclusion in October 2010 of a Protocol on *Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization* (Nagoya Protocol), the SCBD has been seeking the IPU's support for ensuring the speedy ratification of the Nagoya Protocol by national parliaments. To enter into force, it must be ratified by 50 Parties to the Convention.

UNCTAD

- On 28 June 2011, the 53rd executive session of the Trade and Development Board - the governing body of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development - decided to align the modalities of UNCTAD's cooperation with the IPU with the practices of the UN General Assembly as per Resolution 57/32 on Observer Status for the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the General Assembly and Resolution 57/47 on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. In recognition of the unique nature of the IPU, the Board decided to list it as an observer in the category of international organizations, effectively removing the IPU from the list of non-governmental organizations.

World Trade Organization (WTO)

- As part of the WTO Public Forum 2011 that took place in Geneva from 19 to 21 September, the IPU and the European Parliament organized a Parliamentary Panel entitled *Trade in natural resources - A curse or blessing? A parliamentary perspective*. The event drew attention to the political, economic and environmental aspects of the exploitation and trade of natural resources as one of the pillars of the global economy. Its conclusions contributed to the broader agenda for greater parliamentary engagement in the international trade negotiations led by the WTO.
- On 21 September, the IPU hosted the 24th session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO. The Committee was briefed on recent developments in multilateral trade negotiations and on the status of the Doha Round, including preparations for the forthcoming 8th WTO Ministerial Conference, to be held in Geneva in December 2011.