

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

(e) WORLD e-PARLIAMENT CONFERENCE 2012

The World e-Parliament Conference 2012 took place from 13 to 15 September 2012 at the Italian Chamber of Deputies in Rome. The event was co-organized by the United Nations, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the Italian Chamber of Deputies through the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. The Conference brought together close to 500 members of parliament, Secretaries-General, parliamentary staff and other experts – a significant increase from the 300 participants at the previous conference in 2010.

The Conference was structured around plenary sessions focusing on high-level policy discussions and parallel sessions of a more technical nature about the use of ICT in parliament. It provided an opportunity to share good practices, exchange views on latest developments, network with peers, and build partnerships in an international setting.

The quality of presentations was high and their scope broad. Emerging technologies have been quickly put to use by the most technologically-advanced parliaments. Many parliaments are replacing paper with electronic documents, notably on tablet computers, and are making considerable cost savings. Social media are now used by about a third of parliaments to communicate with citizens and another third intend to begin doing so. There is not yet sufficient evidence to understand the impact of social media on parliamentary processes, but this issue will undoubtedly be raised at future conferences. All sessions were webcast live. Video archives for each session are available at: <http://webtv.camera.it/portal/portal/default/Eventi/worldtabella>. PowerPoint presentations are available at: <http://www.ictparliament.org/node/5015>.

The *World e-Parliament Report 2012* was presented by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. It draws on survey data from 156 parliaments, which is an extensive base. The Report notes, among other findings, that 46 per cent of respondents say they have made use of the IPU's *Guidelines for parliamentary websites* in their own parliament. The Report can be downloaded from: <http://www.ictparliament.org/WePReport2012>.

A civil society *Declaration on Parliamentary Openness* was launched during the Conference by representatives of parliamentary monitoring organizations (PMOs). It draws on existing documents, including work by the IPU, and has support from 87 PMOs in 60 countries. The *Declaration* is available at: <http://www.openingparliament.org/>.

The Conference closed on 15 September, the International Day of Democracy. On this occasion, the Italian Foreign Minister, the IPU President and other prominent political figures addressed a special session on the theme *Promoting Peace and Tolerance*.

The Board of the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament met in parallel with the Conference. The representatives of the members of the Board expressed satisfaction with the achievements of the Global Centre since its establishment in 2006. They also expressed serious concerns about the

Centre's funding situation, indicating that the Global Centre might have to cease its activities during the coming year unless new sources of funding were obtained.