

Governing Council
Item 5

CL/191/5(c)-R.1
5 October 2012

INTERIM REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE IPU SINCE THE 190th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

(c) INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY 2012

In November 2007, the United Nations General Assembly declared 15 September International Day of Democracy. The fifth celebration of this Day was observed in 2012 by a significant number of national parliaments, governments, civil society organizations, international organizations and the IPU.

"Dialogue and inclusiveness: Central to Democracy" was the IPU's proposed theme for the International Day of Democracy in 2012. The theme is linked to the analysis of the first *Global Parliamentary Report*¹, published by the IPU and UNDP in April 2012. The report discusses the changing relationship between parliaments and citizens. It examines the ways in which parliaments and individual parliamentarians are attempting to engage citizens and to be more accessible and accountable, as well as the challenges they face in doing so.

A press release² issued by the IPU referred to the tragic consequences of the absence of dialogue in Syria, stating that "Peace can never have a chance in Syria without respect for differences in political views inside or out of the country, or a genuine commitment to using dialogue to end the crisis there". The Organization also reiterated a call made to the Syrian Parliament on 30 August³ to fulfil its legal responsibility to protect the Syrian people regardless of their political allegiances.

¹ www.ipu.org/gpr

² <http://www.ipu.org/press-e/gen120912.htm>

³ <http://www.ipu.org/press-e/gen300812.htm>

The IPU is aware of 36 national parliaments⁴ that organized events to celebrate the International Day of Democracy in 2012, plus the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. This number has remained fairly static in recent years. In countries such as Argentina, Romania and Canada, individual parliamentarians also spearheaded initiatives to mark the Day. In all, more than 90 parliaments have celebrated this Day at least once since 2008.

Parliaments celebrated the Day in a variety of ways. A brief description of these activities is contained in this report. Many parliaments organized their activities around the theme of dialogue and inclusiveness, and a number of parliaments made use of the poster created by the IPU. For example, the Parliament of Uruguay, in partnership with the national postal service, issued a stamp to commemorate the International Day of Democracy using IPU images. All material produced by the IPU and photos from parliamentary events are available on the IPU website in English, French and Spanish at www.ipu.org/idd.

IPU President Mr. Abdelwahad Radi issued a statement on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy, which he delivered at a special session of the World e-Parliament Conference⁵ on 15 September, in the presence of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs and other dignitaries. In his statement, he underlined that "We must ensure that democracy and its institutions are truly inclusive and able to solve today's problems through dialogue". Referring to the Arab Spring, he noted that "People have not taken to the streets to replace one form of dictatorship with another" and highlighted their demands for political systems that allow "all citizens to participate in political dialogue at the national and local levels through free and fair elections and through elected representatives."

The IPU pursued the social media campaign that was launched in 2011, using its Twitter account⁶ to connect with parliamentarians and other members of the parliamentary community. The number of people following the IPU on Twitter rose from 117 to 268 during the six-week period of the campaign.

⁴ Algeria, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Haiti, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Malawi, Myanmar, Namibia, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Serbia, Slovenia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Uruguay and Zambia.

⁵ <http://www.ictparliament.org/WePC2012>

⁶ <https://twitter.com/IPUparliament>

Parliaments	
Algeria	The Algerian Parliament organized a special debate on 17 September to mark the International Day of Democracy. The Deputy-Speaker of the National People’s Assembly made a presentation on "Citizens and dialogue", which was followed by presentations by other MPs.
Andorra	To celebrate the International Day of Democracy 2012, the Parliament of Andorra invited a radio programme produced by young people between 14 and 16 years of age to do a live broadcast from parliament in a bid to encourage young people to take an interest in politics and make their voices heard. This radio programme won the UNICEF International Children’s Day of Broadcasting prize in 2011. The programme included interviews with the Speaker of Parliament and leaders of the parliamentary groups, among others. It took place on Friday 14 September from 12.20 to 2 p.m. The Parliament of Andorra intends to distribute the recording of the programme to all secondary schools in the country.
Australia	To mark the International Day of Democracy on 15 September, a national committee of women parliamentarians invited Australians to nominate their female champions of democracy. The Parliament House in Canberra opened an exhibition called "Democracy has its day".
Austria	The Austrian Parliament commemorated the International Day of Democracy 2012 with a ceremony including readings of Mark Twain’s late 19 th century texts on parliamentarianism and the Austro-Hungarian political system. This ceremony opened a series of events, where the topic of democracy was discussed from various viewpoints. The programme ends on the Austrian National Day on 26 October.
Bahrain	On the occasion of the International Day of Democracy, the Council of Representatives and the Shura Council organized the following activities: (a) A statement on "Dialogue, communication and law as essential for overcoming the challenges of democracy" was jointly issued by both chambers. (b) The Shura Council held a "Democratic Session", during which several members discussed the theme of dialogue and inclusiveness. This session was recorded and subsequently transmitted as a one-and-a-half hour TV show. (c) The national radio also invited several members to discuss the theme of the year. (d) The International Day was promoted through posters and ads in local newspapers.
Bangladesh	The Bangladesh Parliament organized a roundtable discussion on "Dialogue and Inclusiveness- Central to Democracy" to mark the Day. Members of parliament, civil society representatives and the media attended this event, held on 15 September 2012, which highlighted key findings of the <u>Global Parliamentary Report</u> .

Belarus	The Council of the Republic organized an Open Day on 14 September for Belarusian State University undergraduates. Among other activities, students attended an induction course on the legislative process, the purviews of the Standing Committees, voting procedures, etc. The course, which was delivered by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on International Affairs and National Security, allowed students to discuss the history of their country and the challenges of a developing democracy in contemporary society.
Benin	The parliament organized a special session on Monday 17 September to discuss this year's theme "Dialogue and Inclusiveness – Central to Democracy". The session was presided over by the Speaker of Parliament and was attended by a number of parliamentarians and representatives of other government agencies.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	To celebrate the International Day of Democracy, the Parliamentary Assembly organized various activities, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monday 17 September, delegates of 40 national civil society organizations presented the project 'Open Parliament': A fair of NGOs was set up in the lobby of the parliament on 18-19 September – they held discussions and other activities with MPs and citizens. - MPs visited schools to promote the International Day of Democracy
Burkina Faso	The leaders of all parliamentary groups issued a joint declaration in favour of the International Day of Democracy 2012. The parliament coordinated a Radio and TV show, to discuss the importance of dialogue and inclusiveness in democratic systems.
Cameroon	On 15 September, a celebration was hosted by the National Assembly of Cameroon. The Speaker chaired the opening ceremony in the presence of the Prime Minister, members of the diplomatic corps and members of parliament. In addition, the National Assembly organized a roundtable debate on the theme of the year, and an exhibition of paintings with the aim of narrowing the information gap between Parliament and the population.
Czech Republic	An interactive exhibition to mark the 20 th anniversary of the Constitution of the Czech Republic was opened at the Chamber of Deputies. The Speaker, Mrs. Miroslava Němcová, launched a debating project for secondary school students interested in the country's political life and current political issues in cooperation with the local NGO, Agora CE.
Haiti	To mark the International Day of Democracy, the Parliament of Haiti organized the following activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A presentation of the revised Constitution and a distribution of printed copies. - A series of conferences and presentations related to the evolution of democracy in Haiti since 1986.
Hungary	The Hungarian translation of the Executive Summary of the Global Parliamentary Report was published on the parliament's website. The report was discussed at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee on 18 September.

India	On Saturday 15 September, the parliamentary TV station (LSTV) broadcast two programmes, "Right to vote" and "Public Forum", both on the theme of "Dialogue and Inclusiveness – Central to Democracy".
Italy	The <u>World e-Parliament Conference</u> , hosted by the Italian Chamber of Deputies from 13 to 15 September, closed with a celebration of the International Day of Democracy, with IPU President Abdelwahad Radi in attendance.
Latvia	On 28 September, the Saeima hosted its fifth annual Open Day. During this event visitors had the chance to explore the main parliament building, view its interior and architecture, find out more about the daily routine of MPs and obtain information on how to get involved in the legislative process. For the first time, an Information Exchange Fair took place to provide visitors with information on how to take an active part in the legislative process. Many civil society organizations were invited to take part in the Fair.
Malawi	To mark the international Day of Democracy, the Parliament of Malawi organized a panel discussion for parliamentarians from several political parties on the theme of "Dialogue and Inclusiveness – Central to Democracy". The discussion, chaired by the Speaker of the National Assembly, was attended by traditional leaders, religious leaders and students. After the debate, the celebrations included traditional dances, songs, and poem recitals.
Myanmar	On 15 September, the Parliament of Myanmar held a ceremony during which the IPU President's statement on the International Day of Democracy 2012 was read out.
Namibia	<p>To mark the International Day of Democracy 2012, the Parliament of Namibia coordinated the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10 September – Live TV show with the participation of MPs and parliamentary authorities talking about "Dialogue and Inclusiveness". Viewers had the opportunity to call in and share their views on the state of democracy in the country. - 13 September - two MPs appeared on a live show "Good Morning Namibia" on National TV to talk about the International Day of Democracy. - From 10 to 14 September – The National Radio ran awareness programmes on the 'youth slots'. Listeners were encouraged to call in and ask questions regarding the International Day of Democracy, decision making at the local level, the legislative process, etc. and were able to win prizes in the form of gifts from parliament. - 15 September – Fun Day at the Zoo Park organized by the Parliament and the National Radio. Participants were invited to take part in a quiz regarding the International Day of Democracy, and MPs were present at the event to interact with the public. The Fun Day was advertised through the National Radio and in daily newspapers.
Pakistan	The Senate organized a special ceremony at the Pakistan Institute of Parliamentary Services (PIPS) to mark the International Day of Democracy. Senators, students and representatives of the media and civil society attended the ceremony. The theme of the event was

	"Dialogue and Inclusiveness-Central to Democracy". Acting Senate Chairman Sabir Ali Baloch was the chief guest of the occasion.
Peru	The Parliament of Peru organized a "Democracy Month" to celebrate the International Day of Democracy and the anniversary of the parliament. On 23 and 24 September, the parliament hosted an Open Day for visitors and organized workshops and round-table debates with MPs and citizens.
Philippines	The Senate adopted Resolution No. 872 on 17 September, in which it expresses satisfaction at joining the community of nations and parliaments in commemorating the International Day of Democracy.
Republic of Korea	To celebrate the International Day of Democracy, the National Assembly distributed a copy of the <i>Global Parliamentary Report</i> (including a Korean translation of its Executive Summary) to each MP, committee secretary, the library and other key departments.
Romania	One MP from each chamber read out a declaration in plenary to mark the International Day of Democracy (17 September in the Senate and 18 September in the Chamber of Deputies). Both chambers launched special sections on their websites containing presentations and relevant information on the International Day of Democracy. Several MPs and Senators issued press releases and posted messages on social media to stress the importance of the International Day of Democracy.
Rwanda	The Parliament of Rwanda celebrated the International Day of Democracy 2012 with a one-week thematic programme on Democracy and Peace. From 14 to 21 September, MPs visited universities and high schools to debate with students about the progress made by Rwanda in the areas of democracy and peace.
Serbia	The Speaker of the National Assembly, Mr. Nebojsa Stefanovic, was interviewed about the theme of the 2012 International Day of Democracy. National TV broadcast the interview. Starting on 15 September, the parliament organized a six-month campaign during which MPs will visit schools to speak to students about the importance of the role of parliament.
Slovenia	The National Assembly published a message from the President of the Assembly on the International Day of Democracy.
The F.Y.R of Macedonia	The Assembly of the Republic organized a round table discussion on the topic of "Democracy and Gender Equality" on 14 September. The discussion was opened by Mr. Trajko Veljanoski, President of the Assembly.
Trinidad and Tobago	On 15 September, the parliamentary TV station broadcast a press conference held by the Speaker. To highlight the importance of democracy to citizens, the International Day of Democracy was advertised in several daily newspapers, and a documentary on the subject of Dialogue and Inclusiveness was aired on parliamentary TV.
United Arab Emirates	The Federal National Council issued an official statement to join the parliaments of the world in celebrating the International Day of Democracy.

<p>United Kingdom</p>	<p>The IPU Group celebrated the International Day of Democracy with a series of thematic events during the week preceding 15 September. The events embraced this year's theme "Dialogue and Inclusiveness – Central to Democracy".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11 September – Information Stand to find out more about the British Group IPU and its activities - 11 September - Diplomatic Reception to mark the International Day of Democracy - 12 September - Panel Discussion on "Defending the Rights of Parliamentarians" - 12 September - Charity Pub Quiz, hosted by Deputy Speaker Nigel Evans, for MPs and staff
<p>Uruguay</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12 September – The House of Representatives held a Plenary Session at which an MP from each political party took the floor on the theme. - 13 September – The Senate held a Plenary Session celebrating the Day, at which a Senator from each political party took the floor referring to the Day. - A special stamp was issued to commemorate the International Day of Democracy. - A one-day academic meeting was held in the Parliament building on the theme "The dilemmas of Democracy: Politics, society and finance in today's world. What do our political parties in parliament think about democracy? What are the different models of democracy that currently co-exist in our political system? Should our democracy be reformed?" Four keynote speakers and each political party represented in parliament addressed the meeting. The Speaker of the General Assembly, Mr. Danilo Astori, opened the meeting. - Copies of the <u>Global Parliamentary Report</u> were distributed.
<p>Zambia</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Assembly organized an Open Day at a constituency office. Several activities were conducted throughout the day, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a review of parliamentary documents; - a photo exhibition of various parliamentary events; - talks with citizens about how parliament operates, how people can access the parliamentary buildings and how they can participate in the legislative process; and - a drama performance on the role of an MP.
<p>Events at the United Nations</p>	
<p>United Nations Secretary-General</p>	<p>UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted the importance of democracy education in his message for this year's International Day of Democracy on 15 September. He wrote that democracy education is "needed so that all citizens in all nations, in democracies young and old, established or fragile, fully understand their rights and responsibilities. And it is especially needed in countries that have made recent democratic gains so that progress made does not unravel."</p> <p>For further information, see: http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=6276</p>

<p>United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF)</p>	<p>To mark the Day, UNDEF joined governments, the Community of Democracies, the Organization of American States (OAS), the UN Institute for Training and Research and UNESCO at an event on democracy education on 17 September. UNDEF Executive Head Roland Rich participated in a panel discussion along with the Permanent Representatives of Mongolia and Poland, the President of the Council for a Community of Democracies, the Director of Education and Culture of the OAS and others. The event coincided with the launch of a new UNDEF-funded project to put democracy education into wider practice. The panel discussion was webcast live from 1.15 to 2.45 p.m. New York time. Further information http://www.un.org/en/events/democracyday/events.shtml</p>
<p>United Nations Development Programme</p>	<p>UNDP Administrator Helen Clark issued a <u>message</u>, recalling that "Throughout human history, democracy has been built through the efforts of people at the grassroots of communities. When citizens are empowered to demand accountability and transparency; when citizens know their rights and obligations and freely participate in the political processes, democratic governance can take root".</p>
<p>United Nations Office in Geneva</p>	<p>The Open Day at the United Nations on 15 September was placed under the dual banner of the International Day of Democracy and the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. www.unog.ch/openday2012</p>
<p>Other</p>	
<p>Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe</p>	<p>The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a <u>statement</u> on the International Day of Democracy.</p>
<p>European Parliament</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The President of the European Parliament issued a statement to mark the International Day of Democracy. - A poster was published on the home page of the EP's website, along with a note in 20 languages. - The EP and its President promoted celebration of the International Day of Democracy on the social media. - The EP web team published an article about the IPU's theme for International Day of Democracy 2012 in the Huffington Post (UK edition).