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REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

(g) REGIONAL FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR ON "THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS"

Translating international human rights commitments into national realities: The contribution of parliaments to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council

Bucharest (Romania), 17-18 February 2014

The IPU and the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Romania co-organized a regional seminar for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from Central and Eastern Europe on *Translating international human rights commitments into national realities: the contribution of parliaments to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council* on 17 and 18 February 2014.

This seminar was attended by about 70 participants from 15 countries and was aimed at informing them of the functioning of the Human Rights Council and how they could contribute to its work as part of their efforts to promote the human rights of the citizens they represent.

Led by parliamentarians and human rights experts from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the debates were organized into five sessions: the general human rights situation in the region, particularly on the issue of minorities and the administration of justice; the role of parliaments in the promotion of human rights and their involvement in the process of the Universal Periodic Review; case studies of parliaments involved in this process, with the parliamentary contribution to the work of CEDAW as an example of good practices of parliamentary cooperation with UN mechanisms to promote human rights; and the place of human rights in the post-2015 development agenda.

On the situation of human rights in the region, although progress is being made in terms of bringing national legislation in line with relevant international standards, the participants noted significant challenges, including the protection of national minorities and human rights defenders, the promotion of tolerance and the administration of justice. It was recommended that parliaments make these challenges a priority and identify appropriate solutions. In this context, the participants recommended the establishment of dedicated parliamentary committees dealing with human rights or strengthening those that already exist.

Generally speaking, in order to effectively address the human rights challenges parliamentarians are faced with, the participants stressed the need to organize training sessions, especially for new MPs, in order to provide them with the required expertise.

As part of a broader consideration of human rights, the participants felt that parliaments should adopt a strategy incorporating a rights-based approach to their work.

Based on the case studies, the participants called for greater involvement of parliamentarians in the work of the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review. Such involvement would offer parliaments several advantages, including an opportunity to better reflect international human rights standards in their domestic legislation and therefore meet their related commitments. The participants also noted that such involvement should be supported by other actors, including national human rights organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations.