



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

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28 July 2014

Election of the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

(Article 19 of the Statutes and Rules 6, 7 and 8 of
the Rules of the Governing Council)

Candidature

of

Mr. Saber H. Chowdhury (Bangladesh)

On 7 July 2014, the Secretary General received a communication from Mr. Saber H. Chowdhury, MP of Bangladesh, submitting his candidature for the office of President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which is to be filled at the 195th session of the Governing Council.

The text of this communication and the curriculum vitae of Mr. S.H. Chowdhury are to be found in Annexes I and II.

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**COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL
BY MR. SABER H. CHOWDHURY MP OF BANGLADESH**

Dhaka, 7 July 2014

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

I am pleased to advise and notify you of my candidature for the post of President, Inter-Parliamentary Union.

My bio (in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Chinese languages) is attached herewith.

The Bangladesh Parliament is fully supportive of my candidature and is ready to extend all possible assistance.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

(Signed)

Saber H. CHOWDHURY, MP
Bangladesh Parliament



**SABER HOSSAIN CHOWDHURY MP
CANDIDATE FOR POST OF PRESIDENT OF INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

The Challenge

At a time when IPU, the only global organization of national parliaments, is implementing its 2012-2017 strategy prioritizing three areas of work - democracy and parliaments, international involvement of parliaments and IPU as an instrument of parliamentary cooperation - it will be electing during its Geneva Assembly in October 2014, a new President to succeed Hon. Radi.

This is a time of momentous global change and challenges, but also one of opportunities for the IPU in terms of realizing its vision of an organization that is universal, effective and dynamic.

As political head of the IPU, the new President, in addition to continuing the good work and building on the sound foundation laid by Hon. Radi, will have a full agenda - promoting peace and reconciliation in a turbulent world, defending democracy and building the capacity of parliamentarians and the institution of Parliament, making Parliaments effective, democratic, gender-sensitive and responsive, safeguarding human rights, deepening and enriching IPU's engagement with the UN, promoting sustainable development and human well-being, to name a few.

The new President, with a clear grasp of IPU strengths and potentials on the one hand and insights and understanding of the workings and dynamics of the ongoing international processes on the other, thus has to lead, articulate and steer the IPU to achieve its objectives and vision through teamwork and professionalism of the Secretariat, inclusiveness, creativity and fresh perspectives coupled with the right blend of elements of continuity and change.

The Candidate

Hon. Saber H. Chowdhury MP (Bangladesh) is a candidate for the IPU Presidency and possesses the integrity, track record, expertise and skills needed to deliver and perform and also meet new and existing challenges.

Born in September 1961 and first elected to the Parliament in June 1996 from a central constituency in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital city, he was elected for a second term in 2008 and having been re-elected in January 2014, is now serving his third term as a Parliamentarian.

After completing his secondary education in a grammar school in Surrey, England, he graduated with a Joint Honours Degree in Economics/Politics from the School of Oriental & African Studies, University of London. Thereafter as a post graduate, he completed the Academic Stage for Entry to the Bar through a Diploma in Law from the University of Westminster, UK, in 1986.

Having established and run successful businesses as an entrepreneur in Bangladesh and Singapore for ten years, Mr. Chowdhury opted in 1996 for full time engagement in politics.

He has over a period of eighteen years of public service accumulated considerable experience, insights and understanding of political party organizations, ministerial and parliamentary roles and responsibilities, championed causes and continues to provide leadership to local, national and international initiatives. Last but not least, he has been actively engaging in and constructively contributing to IPU's work.

A firm believer in and defender of basic liberties, human rights and individual freedoms and a staunch advocate of the rule of law, he was persecuted and subjected to repeated terms of detention and imprisonment for his political views (in 2002 and 2003).

Amnesty International recognized him as a "prisoner of conscience" and launched a series of global "urgent actions" campaigning for his release and he was eventually set free on directives of the highest courts.

Credentials of the Candidate

The following summarizes some of Hon. Chowdhury's experience and engagement in various fields and issues:

1. *Parliamentary Role:*

He has been an active parliamentarian both within the House as well as in constituency relations and has pioneered community initiatives relating to health care, tobacco control, youth empowerment, self-employment schemes, urban micro credit for women, legal aid, etc.

Hon. Chowdhury has been prominent in enacting ground-breaking legislation through Private Member Bills relating to the Repeal of Leper's Act (doing away with segregation and facilitating treatment and integration of lepers into society) and criminalizing custodial torture.

[\(http://livewire.amnesty.org/2013/11/04/bangladeshs-landmark-law-banning-torture/\)](http://livewire.amnesty.org/2013/11/04/bangladeshs-landmark-law-banning-torture/)

Himself a victim of horrors of custodial violence when in the Opposition and determined to change the system and ensure that perpetrators of such violence (law enforcement agencies) are held accountable, he tabled a Private Members Bill in accordance with the provisions of UN Convention against Torture and this was enacted as the Torture & Custodial Death (Prohibition) Act, 2013.

He has successfully initiated and promoted incorporation of a provision in the Constitution of Bangladesh (Art. 18A) relating to protection of the environment and biodiversity for current and future generations.

He has also played a prominent advocacy and legislative role in the enactment of Bangladesh's law on domestic violence in 2011.

His ability to reach out and foster bi-partisan positions and consensus is best exemplified in the workings of the Bangladesh Parliament's All-Party Group on Climate Change & the Environment and his success in engaging constructively with the Executive on various issues merits particular mention.

A passionate believer in and advocate of cooperation between parliaments as well as parliamentarians acting as links and bridges between various stakeholders in society, his work and engagement over the past five years has taken him to Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Americas.

- He co-authored a joint parliamentary Inquiry of Bangladesh and UK Parliaments - a world first in inter-parliamentary cooperation and networking - on Climate Change Equity, which was released in December 2009 during COP 15 in Copenhagen, Denmark.
- He has been actively involved in initiatives of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and acted as a resource person for the CPA in Zanzibar, Tanzania, in May 2011 for orientation and capacity-building of MPs from Africa and SIDS on climate change challenges.
- In November 2012, Hon. Chowdhury, at the invitation of UNDP Viet Nam shared his experience and expertise with the National Assembly of Viet Nam in Hanoi in considering new legislation for disaster risk reduction.

- As Chair of the Asian Advisory Group of Parliamentarians on DRR, he has interacted with parliamentarians in Seoul (Rep. of Korea) in 2012 and Vientiane (Lao PDR) in 2014 and led the process of parliamentary consultations on a new Hyogo Framework of Action post-2015.
- As Co-President of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), in championing the cause of international peace, he has made the link between resources dedicated to nuclear weapons being freed up and made available for development purposes. He continues to work for a nuclear-weapon-free world and took part in the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Nuclear Disarmament in UN Geneva in July 2013.

Recognizing his expertise, leading institutions have invited Hon. Chowdhury as a resource person and policymaker to share his experience and knowledge to enrich their research and work on development and related issues and a few examples and instances in this regard are cited below.

- Supported by the Australia Agency for International Development (AusAID), Monash University's Sustainability Institute hosted a two-day workshop in Dhaka in April 2011, bringing together policy makers and researchers from Australia, India and Bangladesh to look at climate change and its effect on the Ganges River Basin. Hon. Chowdhury was a leading participant in this event.
- In November 2011, Hon. Chowdhury at the invitation of Gilbert + Tobin School of Law, University of New South Wales, spoke at NSW Parliament House in Sydney on climate change and migration / displacement with dignity to an Australian audience with a particular focus on the impacts of climate change in the Pacific region.
- In April 2012, Hon. Chowdhury was in New York, at the invitation of the Earth Institute, University of Columbia, to speak on the significance of building climate and disaster resilience in coastal cities and shared his knowledge and experience on the issue to enrich public and policy understanding on sustainable development, particularly in the urban context.
- In July 2013, he was in Honolulu, Hawaii, at the invitation of the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies to attend a dialogue on Security Sector Development: National Priorities and Regional Approaches.

2. *Political Party Organization:*

He served from 2001 to 2008 as Organizing Secretary of the Bangladesh Awami League (AL), a party established 62 years ago that led Bangladesh's Independence Movement under its Founding Father, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

After its defeat in the flawed parliamentary elections of 2001, he reorganized and reenergized the Party at the grass-root level and was also a prominent figure in the popular movement to bring about reforms and changes in the electoral process to make elections fair, transparent and equitable.

In the December 2008 elections, AL secured all 90 parliamentary seats for which Mr. Chowdhury had organizational responsibility. During this seven-year period, he also served as Political Secretary to the President of AL, Hon. Sheikh Hasina, who was then the Leader of the Opposition.

3. *Ministerial / Executive Positions:*

During 1999–2001, as the youngest Member of the Cabinet, he successfully served as Deputy Minister, Ministry of Ports & Shipping and thereafter as the Deputy Minister for Local Government, Rural Development & Cooperatives – one of Bangladesh's largest development Ministries. He is widely regarded to have infused dynamism into the Ministry work and helped set new benchmarks and standards in transparency, accountability and service delivery.

4. *Sports Administration (National & International):*

As President of the Bangladesh Cricket Board (1996 – 2001), his vision and leadership were instrumental in Bangladesh's elevation to Full Member (Test) Status of the International Cricket Council.

In 2001, the Bangladesh Cricket Board, under his presidency, was recognized and decorated with the country's highest national award – the Independence Day Award. In 2002, Mr. Chowdhury was conferred, for his services to world cricket, Honorary Life Membership of Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC). He also served as Director of the International Cricket Council from 1997 to 2001.

In a country that is very politically polarized, Mr. Chowdhury promoted and established cricket and the related successes of the Bangladesh Cricket Team as a platform of national unity, inspiring particularly the youth in believing in the beauty of their dreams.

5. *At the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU):*

Hon. Chowdhury served initially as first Vice-President for a year and thereafter as President, First Standing Committee for four years from 2010 to 2014 as a representative of the Asia-Pacific geopolitical group. He is currently a member of the IPU Standing Committee on UN Affairs.

Since 2009, he has attended all the IPU Assemblies and has actively engaged in and contributed to IPU's work - in plenary, standing committees and side events - relating to nuclear non-proliferation & disarmament, MDGs, climate change, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development, empowerment and elevation of least developed countries, maternal and child health.

He has attended Annual Parliamentary Hearings at the UN and has been regularly invited (in 2012, 2013 and 2014) by UN DESA and ECOSOC as a panellist and also as a moderator in various high-level and ministerial dialogues at the UN as well as DCF events in New York and Brisbane.

He has been a co-Rapporteur for IPU's Second Standing Committee during its 130th Assembly in Geneva in March 2014 on the agenda item: "Towards risk resilient development: Taking into consideration demographic trends and natural constraints".

During his two-term tenure as President of IPU's First Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, resolutions on following important agenda items were extensively discussed, passionately debated and finally adopted in the respective Assemblies per below:

- *Providing a sound legislative framework aimed at preventing electoral violence, improving election monitoring and ensuring the smooth transition of power – 124th Assembly, Panama City;*
- *Promoting and practising good governance as a means of advancing peace and security : Drawing lessons from recent events in the Middle East and North Africa – 126th Assembly, Kampala;*
- *Enforcing the responsibility to protect : The role of parliament in safeguarding civilians' lives – 128th Assembly, Quito City;*
- *Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: The contribution of parliaments – 130th Assembly, Geneva.*

Hon. Chowdhury also chaired all sessions of the First Standing Committee during IPU's 125th Assembly in Bern, its 127th Assembly in Quebec City and its 129th Assembly in Geneva.

As part of an IPU delegation that included Hon. Rebecca Kadaga, Speaker of Parliament of Uganda, and Mr. Anders B. Johnsson, the then Secretary General of IPU, he interacted in Monrovia, Liberia, with the UN SG's High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the post-2015 development agenda, articulating and advocating for incorporation of democratic governance as a goal in itself.

He has been a focal point for LDCs in the Bangladesh Parliament and contributed to the parliamentary track (within the Bangladesh Parliament and also internationally) on the Istanbul Programme of Action as adopted during the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs.

6. *Current Positions/ Responsibilities*

Currently, he holds the following posts and responsibilities in Bangladesh and internationally:

- *Chairman*, Parliamentary Standing Committee on Ministry of Textiles & Jute, Bangladesh Parliament;
- *Member*, Petition's Committee, Bangladesh Parliament;
- *Member*, Standing Committee, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Bangladesh Parliament;
- *Chair*, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Climate Change and the Environment, Bangladesh Parliament;
- *President*, Globe International (Bangladesh Chapter);
- *Member*, Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, Inter-Parliamentary Union;
- *Co-President*, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND);
- *Global Champion*, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Geneva, Switzerland;
- *Chair*, Parliamentary Advisory Group to UN Secretary-General's Special Representative on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Bangladesh, based on its track record in recent years, is recognized as a role model for development and an outstanding example in this regard is in the field of social, economic and political empowerment of women.

Bangladesh today holds the unique distinction of being the only parliamentary democracy wherein the Honourable Leader of the House (and Prime Minister of the country), the Honourable Speaker of the Parliament, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Deputy Leader of the House, are all women.

All four of them fully support and endorse Hon. Chowdhury's candidature for Presidency of the IPU and request and hope that Member Parliaments of the IPU will also repose their faith, trust and confidence on him by electing him as their next President.

Hon. Speaker of Bangladesh Parliament has already written to each of IPU's Geopolitical Group Chairs as well as to Hon. Speakers of all Member Parliaments endorsing Hon. Chowdhury's candidature and seeking their support.