



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

CL/196/SR.1
1 June 2015

Summary records of the Governing Council

196th session

29 March and 1 April 2015

National Convention Centre (NCC), Hanoi (Viet Nam)

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First sitting

Sunday, 29 March 2015

The sitting was called to order at 9.20 a.m., with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), in the Chair.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (CL/196/A.1)

The revised provisional agenda, contained in document CL/196/A.1, was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 195th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (CL/195/SR.1)

The summary records of the 195th session of the Governing Council, contained in document CL/195/SR.1, were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

PROPOSALS FOR THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 132nd ASSEMBLY

At the proposal of Mr. M.R. Rabbani (Pakistan), seconded by Mr. A.K. Pimentel III (Philippines), Mr. N.S. Hung, President of the National Assembly of Viet Nam, was elected by acclamation as President of the 132nd IPU Assembly.

Item 4 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP

(a) Requests for affiliation and reaffiliation to the IPU

The Secretary General, in reporting that no new requests for affiliation or reaffiliation had been received, emphasized that the IPU was unstinting in its efforts to recruit new members in the interest of achieving universal membership. Delegations from the parliaments of Brunei, Fiji and Nauru were attending the present Assembly as observers with a view to affiliation or reaffiliation and discussions relating to membership had reached an advanced stage with the parliaments of Comoros, Guyana, Kiribati, Swaziland, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Similar discussions had been initiated with the parliaments of Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada and Jamaica, and with that of Liberia, currently suspended from membership for non-payment of contributions. It was therefore hoped that new requests for affiliation or reaffiliation would be received before the next Assembly in October 2015 and, moreover, that support would be lent to the IPU's continuing endeavours to pave the way for reaffiliation by the United States Congress, including by mobilizing influential support and good will.

The President endorsed the call for support aimed at promoting the universal membership to which the IPU, a unique organization of sovereign parliaments, constantly aspired.

(b) Situation of certain parliaments

The President stressed the importance of strong, transparent and consistent governance with respect to membership issues, particularly in the light of the IPU's evolving institutional relationship with the United Nations.

The Secretary General, reporting on the deliberations of the Executive Committee concerning the situation of certain parliaments that were non-functioning, transitional or affected by political developments, said that no further IPU monitoring was currently considered necessary in the cases of Cambodia, Fiji, Madagascar and Tunisia following the establishment of newly formed parliaments in those countries. The Committee's conclusions concerning the cases of Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Egypt, Haiti, Libya, Nepal, Thailand and Yemen would be conveyed once its discussion of those cases was complete. Three Members, namely Bolivia, Congo and Honduras, were to be deprived of voting rights pursuant to Article 5.2 of the IPU Statutes and until such time as the arrears in the payment of their financial contributions were settled.

The President added that he would seek to discuss those issues with the delegations concerned during the course of the Assembly.

The Governing Council took note of the situation of certain parliaments.

(c) Observer status

The Secretary General said that no formal requests for observer status had been received. Informal discussions were under way, however, with a number of organizations that had expressed interest in acquiring that status.

Item 5 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

**(a) On his activities since the 195th session of the Governing Council
(CL/196/5(a)-R.1)**

The President outlined the activities he had undertaken since the 195th session of the Governing Council, as described in document CL/196/5(a)-R.1, highlighting in particular those relating to nuclear disarmament, climate change, disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and cooperation with the United Nations.

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President said that most of the subjects discussed by the Executive Committee during its two full days of deliberations would be reported on under the corresponding items of the agenda.

The Governing Council took note of the report of the President.

Item 6 of the agenda

**ANNUAL REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE ACTIVITIES
OF THE IPU FOR 2014**

(a) Annual Report of the Secretary General

The Secretary General, noting that the Annual Report had been purpose-designed to enhance the IPU's visibility through a recognizable visual identity, recalled that 2014 had been defined by a change of guard at the helm of the IPU and by the celebration of its 125th anniversary. It had also served to underline the challenges facing the parliamentary community and such matters as the importance of a robust response to crisis situations, the need to promote inter-parliamentary dialogue and the problem of the dwindling resources available to fund the IPU's core business.

The IPU's goal of universality extended to incorporating into its work issues of relevance to all constituencies, as was reflected in the priority activities detailed in the Annual Report, which were aimed, inter alia, at safeguarding peace and democracy; strengthening parliaments, including through such tools as the recently adopted Common Principles for Support to Parliaments; fostering political participation by women, young people, indigenous peoples and minorities; ending violence against women; protecting human rights and those safeguarding them; fostering cooperation with the United Nations; supporting global processes relating to sustainable development, climate change and disaster risk reduction; working for progress in international trade; preventing and treating HIV/AIDS; and improving maternal and child health. The Annual Report also contained an overview of the IPU and a summary of its financial results.

(b) Annual reporting exercise by Members
(CL/196/6(b)-R.1)

The President, drawing attention to document CL/196/6(b)-R.1 concerning the result of the preliminary survey conducted on the engagement of parliaments in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), expressed disappointment at the fact that only 57 of the IPU's 166 Members had responded to a survey so vital to directing the course of the IPU's work. He therefore urged a more positive contribution in future to the annual reporting exercise, in the interest of ensuring that the IPU provided the value expected by Members in return for their contributions.

The Secretary General recalled that Members had a statutory duty to report steps taken and results obtained concerning the implementation of IPU resolutions. The aim of the annual reporting exercise was not only to gauge progress and gather information, but also to promote understanding of good parliamentary practices in the matters concerned.

The Governing Council took note of the Annual Report by the Secretary General.

Item 10 of the agenda

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2014
(CL/196/10-R.1 to R.3)

The President drew attention to the financial report and audited financial statements (CL/196/10-R.1), the Internal Auditor's report (CL/196/10-R.2) and the report on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2015 (CL/196/10-R.3).

Mr. R.M.K. Al Shariqi (United Arab Emirates), interim Chairperson of the Executive Committee Sub-Committee on Finance, outlining the financial results of the IPU on the basis of the information provided in those documents, pointed out that the accounts of the IPU and the closed legacy Pension Fund had been consolidated into a single set of financial statements and that the IPU was again fully compliant with the International Public Accounting Standards (IPSAS). Owing to budgetary cost savings and to IPSAS adjustments relating to the closed Pension Fund, the IPU had achieved an operating surplus of CHF 643,000, which had increased its net asset value and reserves. The Working Capital Fund thus stood at CHF 6.5 million, or 84 per cent of the target set in 2006. Voluntary funding of CHF 2 million had been utilized for programme activities in 2014, representing an increase of 24 per cent over the previous year. The Executive Committee recommended approval of those positive financial results for 2014.

As to a request received from the Twelve Plus Group for a reduction of 10 per cent in the amount of assessed contributions payable for 2016, the Sub-Committee on Finance would follow its established procedure in preparing the annual budget for that year and undertake broad consultations relating to that request.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden), Internal Auditor, delivered his report as contained in document CL/196/10-R.2.

The Secretary General drew attention to the logframe, set out in document C/196/10-R.1, which summarized the objectives and impacts of IPU activities carried out in 2014. He confirmed that, as part of its continuing efforts to achieve full transparency, the IPU was committed to implementing the recommendations made by the External Auditor, first by transferring to the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments the monies from the account of the now defunct Global Parliamentary Foundation for Democracy once the Swiss requirements for closure of the Foundation had been fully completed; second, by offsetting against arrears owed the advance of CHF 2,700 paid by the Parliament of the Marshall Islands in anticipation of its reaffiliation to the IPU, which had not yet taken place as planned; and third, by stringently implementing internal controls in order to avoid any repetition of minor bookkeeping errors.

While cautioning against over-reliance on the voluntary funding vigorously sought by the IPU in pursuit of its mandated activities, he highlighted the generous support received from such external partners as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the Japanese Worldwide Support for Development organization, Irish Aid, the United States Agency for International Development, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the World Health Organization, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. The IPU was also seeking further support from existing donors, such as the United Arab Emirates, and potential new donors, including China, Equatorial Guinea and Saudi Arabia, notably in connection with its work in the area of maternal, newborn and child health. It had furthermore benefited from the secondment of personnel by Members, among them the Republic of Korea and Egypt, and encouraged emulation of such examples of support.

The President commented that smart investment was essential to ensuring that IPU capacities were sufficient to cope, in the post-2015 era, with the challenges entailed in the shift of focus from SDG advocacy to SDG implementation. Parliaments must also ensure that adequate budgetary allocations were approved for capacity-building aimed at promoting their response to and delivery of the goals set.

Mr. R. del Picchia (France), speaking in his capacity as representative of the Twelve Plus Group in the Sub-Committee on Finance and in the Executive Committee, and in the interest of transparency, explained that the Twelve Plus Group had requested a reduction of 10 per cent in assessed contributions for 2016 given that an earlier undertaking to reduce those contributions by 6 per cent had not yet fully materialized on account of outgoings associated with the upcoming Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. Moreover, the IPU risked falling membership numbers should parliaments be unable to pay dues that were beyond their means owing to their financial difficulties or indeed the strength of the Swiss franc against their own currencies. Assessed contributions were instrumental to funding the budget for IPU programmes falling within its core mandate, whereas programmes not meeting that description must essentially be funded by other means.

The President said that those comments would be taken on board by the Executive Committee in considering the request.

The Secretary General, responding to a question from the floor about IPU capacity-building activities relating to the new SDGs, said that the IPU had thus far been engaged in raising parliamentary awareness of the SDG negotiating process and the challenges inherent in implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. It had also advocated the inclusion of governance and democracy in that agenda, extending to incorporation of the important role of parliaments. Once the SDGs were adopted, the IPU would direct its attention to assisting parliaments with implementation.

The President, stressing the close connection between sustainable development, disaster risk reduction and climate change, remarked that parliamentary feedback to surveys conducted as part of the IPU's annual reporting exercise would be even more critical to forging an appropriate and coherent response to needs identified accordingly during the SDG implementation stage.

The Governing Council approved the financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2014.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

The Secretary General announced that a quorum of 87 had been established, in accordance with Rule 34.2 of the Governing Council, on the basis of the participation of 172 members in the present sitting. That quorum was present.

The sitting rose at 11 a.m.

Second sitting

Wednesday, 1 April 2015

The meeting was called to order at 9.15 a.m., with the President of the IPU. Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), in the Chair.

Item 12 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(a) Meeting of Women Parliamentarians (CL/196/12(a)-R.1)

Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan (Viet Nam), President of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the Meeting (CL/196/12(a)-R.1), drew particular attention to the Meeting's celebration of its 30th anniversary, notably the adoption of *My power for women's power*, a call for action by parliamentarians to create a better world for all women and girls. She further outlined the Meeting's other activities, including its discussion on the subjects of cyberwarfare and of water governance from the female perspective, which had resulted in amendments to the draft resolutions on those topics; its interactive panel discussion on Beijing+20, which had focused on progress achieved in the area of women's rights, gender equality and women's participation in decision-making; and the discussion conducted by the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians to identify strategies for enhancing the role of the Meeting, with the result that a set of amendments were to be developed with a view to improving the visibility of the Meeting, facilitating its functioning and fostering gender mainstreaming within the IPU.

The President noted the encouraging pursuit of the goals of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians and joined in urging all parliamentarians to sign the call for action issued by the Meeting.

(b) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

(i) Reports of the Committee (CL/196/12(b)-R.1 and R.2)

Mr. B. Fabritius (Germany), member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, replacing for the Committee President, Ms. Ann Clwyd, reported that, at its session in Hanoi, the Committee had examined 39 cases concerning the situation of 179 members of parliament in 24 countries. Of the members of parliament to whom those cases related, 46 per cent were from Asia, 18 per cent from Africa, 8 per cent from the Americas and 5 per cent from Europe. Twelve per cent of the cases concerned women members of parliament and 74 per cent concerned opposition members of parliament.

Hearings had been held with 10 delegations and complainants, all of whom he thanked for having given some of their time to the Committee. Such hearings were essential for the Committee's work, enhancing its understanding of the cases before it and allowing for expressions of concern and exchanges of views. On account of its workload and the shorter duration of Assemblies, however, the Committee was not always able to respond positively to

last-minute requests for such hearings. While it strived to accommodate requests whenever possible, its agenda was set well in advance, as was its hearings schedule. Priorities were largely defined on the basis of the written communications and requests submitted by Member Parliaments prior to its sessions.

Member Parliaments were systematically invited to keep the Committee apprised of the situation of the individual parliamentarians under examination. Pursuant to its procedure, the Committee examined the cases before it primarily on the basis of written information submitted by complainants and by parliamentary authorities. The responsibility to provide all necessary written information in a timely manner was incumbent on the parties and it indeed served their respective interests by ensuring that the Committee was in a position to take an informed decision on the matter at hand.

Information provided in the course of the Committee's session could serve this purpose only when it related to unexpected developments that significantly affected cases and were so recent as to preclude the possibility of any earlier submission of information. However, in the event that no information had been forthcoming, despite repeated prior requests, and documentation was suddenly provided at the time of the Committee's deliberations, the Committee reserved the right to draw its own conclusions on the purpose served by such a late submission of information. He therefore urged all Member Parliaments to exercise diligence and facilitate the work of this Committee by conveying their observations and any supporting information in a timely manner.

Turning to the cases discussed by the Committee, he said that, while freedom of expression was a direct or indirect concern in almost all instances, arbitrary detention or arrest, lack of due process in proceedings against members of parliament, and torture or ill-treatment also ranked as the most frequent abuses examined. His presentation of those cases related to the draft decisions set out in document CL/196/12(b)-R.2, with the exception of the cases in Venezuela, for which there was no draft decision.

AFRICA

KENYA

The Committee was pleased to announce positive developments in the long-standing case of Mr. Melitus Mugabe Were, who had been murdered in January 2008 in Kenya. It welcomed the conclusion of the related judicial proceedings, in February 2015, and the sentencing of those responsible for Mr. Were's murder. It was also pleased that the Parliament of Kenya had continued to monitor the proceedings to date in line with its overall commitment to ensuring that the crimes committed in the aftermath of the 2007 presidential elections would not go unpunished. The Committee trusted that it would be kept informed in the event of an appeal against the conviction.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Melitus Mugabe Were.

RWANDA

Regrettably, there was no further news in the prolonged case of Léonard Hitimana, a former member of the Transitional National Assembly last seen alive 12 years earlier. Also regrettable was the silence of the parliamentary authorities in response to the Committee's calls for effective parliamentary oversight to shed light on Mr. Hitimana's fate. The Committee now had no option but to consider that the absence of a serious investigation corroborated the long-standing charge that Mr. Hitimana was the victim of an enforced disappearance. It consequently urged the authorities to carry out an independent and prompt investigation, examining all lines of enquiry and exploring in particular the information provided by the complainants, according to which Mr. Hitimana had been abducted, tortured and assassinated by the Rwandan military intelligence services in order to silence all opposition to the dissolution of his party in the run-up to the 2003 presidential and legislative elections.

Ever convinced that the pursuit of new lines of inquiry would soon lead to the emergence of new evidence, the Committee was counting on the Parliament of Rwanda to carry out its oversight function on that score. It also called on the Parliament to help expedite, in line with Rwanda's commitment, the ratification of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Léonard Hitimana.

ZAMBIA

Presenting the report of the on-site mission that the Committee carried out to Zambia in September 2014, contained in document CL/196/12(b)-R.2, he expressed immense gratitude to the Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia for his cooperation in the organization of the mission and for providing all the necessary documentation. The Committee also greatly appreciated the continuation of its open and frank exchange of views with the Speaker in Hanoi.

The mission report focused largely on challenges surrounding the Public Order Act in that the Committee was concerned by specific incidents in 2012 and 2013 in which reliance on the Act appeared to have run counter to the rights of members of parliament to freedom of assembly and to liberty. It therefore welcomed the prospect of effective action aimed at modernization of the Act and hoped that the recommendations in the mission report would receive due consideration.

The Committee was also hopeful that, in the light of the revised Public Order Act and the two-year absence of allegations of any new abuses, the incidents of 2012 and 2013 belonged to the past. It therefore requested the members of parliament affected by those events to state whether they saw any further need for the Committee to continue examining their case.

While the Committee would continue to examine the case of Mr. Nkombo, who had been attacked at a police station in February 2013, it proposed to close the examination of several other cases where legal proceedings against parliamentarians were no longer pending.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of 20 parliamentarians in Zambia.

AMERICAS

VENEZUELA

As the result of very useful exchanges of views with the leader of the Venezuelan delegation, the complainant and an opposition member of the Parliament of Venezuela, the Committee had been able to hear and take account of different perspectives on the cases before it relating to opposition members of parliament in Venezuela. It nonetheless continued to believe that nothing would offer a better opportunity for achieving progress in those cases than a mission to Venezuela, which it had been requesting for some time and therefore hoped to undertake in the near future.

ASIA

MALAYSIA

In February 2015, the Federal Court had confirmed the conviction and five-year prison term for opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim on a sedition charge. The report of the IPU trial observer attending the court hearings from the outset had been very critical of the Federal Court's findings. Three days earlier in Hanoi, however, the Malaysian delegation had presented the Committee with an extensive written rebuttal of the IPU trial observation report. While thankful for those comments, the Committee regretted that it had received them so late. It would nonetheless examine them and revert to the matter at the next Assembly in October 2015.

As to the cases relating to the two draft decisions, one of which was new, the Committee was concerned by their connection with an apparent wave of criminal proceedings limiting the rights to freedom of expression and assembly of members of parliament and other Malaysian citizens.

On 10 March 2015, Nurul Izzah, daughter of Anwar Ibrahim, had read out portions of the statement made by her father at the close of his trial in which he had strongly criticized the judiciary. Days later, she had been arrested and held overnight under the Sedition Act. The Committee failed to understand how what she had said was not protected by parliamentary privilege and called on the authorities to stop any investigation that was ongoing on account of her statement in Parliament.

Of the five opposition parliamentarians from Malaysia who faced charges or were being investigated under the Sedition Act, one was now also under investigation, together with two other members of parliament, for his alleged involvement in a rally in support of Anwar Ibrahim. The Committee had therefore decided to monitor those legal proceedings closely.

In its very useful exchange of views with the Malaysian delegation in Hanoi, the Committee had learned that the Malaysian Parliament would review in the coming weeks proposals to amend the Sedition Act. In light of reports that those amendments might further limit, rather than raise, standards for free speech, the Committee asked the Parliament to do everything possible to ensure that the new legislation fully guaranteed that citizens and parliamentarians alike could speak out freely without fear of undue legal action.

The Committee welcomed the invitation extended by the delegation to go to Malaysia and indeed believed that a mission would enhance its understanding of the review of the Sedition Act, identify opportunities for sharing other countries' legislative experiences and help it to comprehend fully the application of the Sedition Act in the pending proceedings against members of parliament.

The President added that the Secretary General's impending visit to Malaysia following the Assembly would also surely contribute to the Committee's work in that connection.

Mr. K.S. Wee (Malaysia), recalling information provided to the Committee during its hearing in Hanoi with his delegation, said that the Sedition Act of 1948 remained valid until such time as it was amended or repealed. In the interim, the unique cultural and religious sensitivities inherent to Malaysia demanded the use of means for ensuring social harmony and pre-empting public unrest. The opposition members of parliament concerned had not been arrested in order to silence dissent or suppress the opposition for the benefit of the ruling party but rather because they had contravened the current Sedition Act. A bill emanating from the comprehensive review of the Act announced in 2012 with a view to the best interests of his country's multiracial and multicultural society was due to be tabled the following week before his Parliament, which again unreservedly extended a sincere invitation for the Committee to meet with it in Malaysia, in May 2015, in order to gain further understanding of the issues that had been addressed.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decisions relating, respectively, to the case of seven parliamentarians and to the case of Ms. Nurul Izzah Anwar. The delegation of Malaysia expressed its reservation regarding the decision.

MALDIVES

The Committee considered that the serious, repeated and deeply concerning death threats made since 2014 against opposition members of parliament must be tackled through speedy and effective investigations and, in agreement with the parliamentarians concerned, the establishment of appropriate security measures. Equally concerning was the climate of confrontation and polarization outside and inside the Parliament of the Maldives since the arrest, trial and conviction of former President Nasheed. While calling on the authorities, in particular the law enforcement agencies, to show restraint when handling public protests, the Committee also called on all political parties in the Maldives to move beyond political expediency and partisanship and to engage constructively in dialogue inside and outside Parliament in order to resolve their differences.

Given the complexity and seriousness of the concerns in the Maldivian cases and the contradictory views held on many of the facts, the Committee believed that an urgent on-site mission would be very useful to enabling it to gather first-hand information on the allegations and ascertain the prospects for their examination and clarification in the current political situation in the Maldives. It was therefore pleased that the Maldivian delegation welcomed such a mission, to which it looked forward in the near future.

A delegate from the United Kingdom, noting the fierce response of the Maldivian Government and its supporters to expressions of concern relating to the arrest, improper trial and imprisonment of former President Nasheed, said that it must be impressed upon the Maldivian authorities during the Committee's mission to the country that such expressions in no way constituted foreign interference in Maldivian domestic affairs. On the contrary, it constituted exercise of the right to protect the human rights of parliamentarians. The Committee's work was therefore most welcome, as was the support demonstrated on that score by the Maldivian delegation.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of 30 parliamentarians.

MONGOLIA

The Committee had noted with appreciation that the Parliament of Mongolia welcomed a mission, which would help the Committee obtain first-hand information on progress made in recent years in the investigation into the murder of Mr. Zorig and promote its understanding of the challenges facing investigators. The Parliament having underscored the need for foreign forensic technical assistance in order to advance the investigation further, the Committee would ensure that its delegation was accompanied by an international forensics expert.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Zorig.

PAKISTAN

The Committee was pursuing its examination of the case of Mr. Fatyana, a former member of the IPU Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights and a vocal critic of police brutality in Pakistan. His residence had been violently attacked in June 2012 and the police had allegedly not only failed to intervene to protect him but had facilitated the attack.

Alarming, the judicial proceedings initiated against those who had attacked Mr. Fatyana's residence in June 2012 had apparently been discontinued. The Committee remained deeply concerned that, almost three years after the events, no serious attempt appeared to have been made to hold the attackers or the complicit police officers accountable. It urged the Parliament of Pakistan and all relevant Pakistani authorities to take urgent action to ensure that the attack did not remain unpunished.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Fatyana.

PHILIPPINES

The Committee had been examining for a number of years the case of the Batasan Four, which had consisted in various legal proceedings against opposition members of parliament. Those proceedings had commenced shortly after a rebellion case against the members had been dismissed and judged to be unfounded and politically motivated.

Although the Committee noted with satisfaction that two of the judicial proceedings faced by some of those members could be considered dismissed, it deeply regretted that the Nueva Ecija case had remained at a standstill since 2009. The Committee recalled that the right to be tried without undue delay was enshrined in the International Bill of Human Rights and designed to ensure that people were not kept in a state of uncertainty as to their fate for too long.

The Committee had also taken note that cases against Mr. Ocampo were now proceeding after years of delay. It would be following those proceedings closely and trusted that the courts would take due account of all the concerns raised by Mr. Ocampo regarding procedural irregularities and the veracity of the evidence used.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of four parliamentarians.

EUROPE

BELARUS

In the case of Mr. Victor Gonchar, the Committee remained appalled that impunity continued to prevail almost 16 years after Mr. Gonchar's disappearance, which reaffirmed its view that the Parliament of Belarus had a direct responsibility to ensure that all relevant authorities made every effort to identify and punish those responsible for the enforced disappearance of one of its members. The Committee also deeply regretted that the Parliament of Belarus had remained silent on the proposed visit of the Committee to Belarus and had supplied no updated information. The Committee remained keen to conduct a visit to Belarus and once again urged the authorities to respond positively to the request.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Gonchar.

Mr. V. Senko (Belarus) stated that information repeatedly submitted to the Committee relating to the case of Mr. Gonchar had not been adequately taken into account. The decision not only failed to address the matter in hand but furthermore went beyond the Committee's mandate in citing a decision of a United Nations human right treaty body relating to an individual who was not, and never had been, a member of his country's Parliament. Neither did the decision promote the spirit of cooperation demonstrated by his delegation in constantly advocating constructive dialogue with the Committee. It therefore disassociated itself from the consensus adoption of the decision, which it would treat as non-binding.

Mr. B. Fabritius (Germany), member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, responded that the other individual referred to in the decision was in fact a person who had disappeared together with Mr. Gonchar. No information had been received from the Parliament of Belarus for many years nor had any response been received to the Committee's request, made six weeks earlier, for updated information. It would very much appreciate an invitation to visit the country in order to advance its understanding of the case.

Mr. V. Senko (Belarus) said that no external assistance in the ongoing investigations into the case was required.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

PALESTINE/ISRAEL

The Committee was profoundly disturbed by the continued detention of the Speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, who found himself in an Israeli prison cell for the third time in nine years. It considered his treatment an affront to the authority of the Palestinian Legislative Council and feared that Speaker Dweik's arrest might again be based solely on his political affiliation. It was therefore keen to hear from the Israeli authorities whether formal charges of specific criminal activity had been filed against him, in which case it called on them to try him in a fair and transparent legal process guaranteeing the full right of defence, or otherwise to release him without delay. In the event that Mr. Dweik stood trial, it would like an IPU observer to attend and report on how due process was being respected in the proceedings.

While perhaps the most symbolic member of the Palestinian Legislative Council in an Israeli jail, Speaker Dweik was not alone; the list of imprisoned Council members included 10 who were in administrative detention. In light of the long-standing concerns about such detention, the Committee sincerely hoped that, with the help of the recently elected parliamentary authorities in Israel, one of its members could finally attend and report on the judicial reviews of the administrative detention of the members of parliament.

In the cases of Mr. Marwan Barghouti and Mr. Ahmad Sa`adat, who were still serving their long prison terms, the Committee regretted that it had nothing new to report. The previous decisions on their cases therefore remained fully valid, which is why it was not presenting new draft decisions for consideration.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decisions relating to the case of 33 parliamentarians and to the case of Mr. Dweik.

Recalling in conclusion that the new working methods adopted by the Committee in 2014 were aimed at promoting the visibility of the Committee's work, Mr. Fabritius said that, on International Human Rights Day in December 2014, the Committee had for the first time released annual statistics on its cases and intended to continue doing so in future. In 2014, the Committee had examined the situation of 311 parliamentarians from 41 countries from all regions, yet that figure represented only a fraction of the abuses suffered by members of parliament.

Pursuant to its procedures, the Committee was only able to examine cases referred to it from a qualified complainant. Many other cases, some of them extremely serious, were not examined by the Committee, however, because they had not been referred to it by a qualified complainant in line with those procedures. Bearing in mind that the Committee existed to protect all parliamentarians and in the spirit of parliamentary solidarity, he encouraged Member Parliaments and individual parliamentarians to be active in referring cases to the Committee. When members of parliament were under threat, the mobilization of colleagues in an act of solidarity not only had an extremely positive concrete impact on any individual case but also helped to ensure that no parliamentarian was left behind. Such solidarity was indispensable to the Committee's work and could make all the difference in both advancing the serious cases it faced, further promoting and protecting human rights and, consequently, further empowering parliaments around the world. He therefore encouraged Members to keep parliamentary solidarity in mind and to use their powers as members of parliament to help their fellow colleagues.

Ms. O. Zuhel (Ukraine) requested support from parliaments worldwide for the cause of Nadiya Savchenko, a Ukrainian parliamentarian who had been abducted and was now imprisoned in the Russian Federation, despite the alleged absence of proof that she was guilty of any crime. Time was running out; she had been on hunger strike for over 90 days.

The President suggested that details of the case be transmitted to the Committee for its consideration and underscored the importance of solidarity in supporting the Committee's vital work of protecting the rights of human rights defenders. He thanked those parliaments that had agreed to missions by the Committee and encouraged others to follow their example.

(ii) Proposal of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to amend its Rules
(CL/196/12(b)-P.1)

The President, referring to a proposal set out in document CL/196/12(b)-P.1 for amendment of the Rules of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliaments, said he took it that the Council would wish to endorse the proposal.

It was so agreed.

(iii) Election of one member
(CL/196/12(b)-P.2 to P.4)

The President drew attention to documents CL/196/12(b)-P.2 to P.4, which set out details of the three candidatures received for the position of member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

The Secretary General announced that Mr. A. Hashim Ali Mahdi (Sudan) had withdrawn his candidature in the interest of consensus. A vote by show of hands would therefore take place, pursuant to Rule 29 of the Rules of the Governing Council, in order to elect one of the two remaining candidates for the position, namely Mr. N. Colmenares (Philippines) and Mr. A.A. Alaradi (Bahrain).

Mr. A.A. Alaradi (Bahrain) was elected by 28 votes to 25 as member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

(c) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/196/12(c)-R.1)

Lord Judd (United Kingdom), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, highlighted discussions conducted during the Committee's two meetings in Hanoi, as described in its report (CL/196/12(c)-R.1), which covered, inter alia, the planned parliamentary mission to the Syrian Arab Republic, in which the Committee looked forward to participating, and the valuable perspectives provided by the Speakers of the Syrian and Jordanian Parliaments. Concerning the unforeseen disruptions to a planned roundtable on water and a mission to Jordan and Ramallah, the Committee was hopeful that its patience and perseverance in the face of such frustrations would soon culminate in the reorganization of those two events. In short, the Committee remained ever mindful of the need to keep sight of the human beings whom it aimed to serve; words were no substitute for effective action.

The President expressed appreciation for the results of the Committee's dedication to pursuing its objectives.

(d) Group of Facilitators for Cyprus
(CL/196/12(d)-R.1)

The President delivered the report of the Committee, as contained in document CL/196/12(d)-R.1.

(e) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

Mr. E. Dombo (Uganda), member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, reported that, owing to the absence of the required quorum at its meeting in Hanoi, the Committee had instead conducted informal discussions on various topics, including the situation of refugees worldwide; difficulties relating to the delivery of refugee assistance, such as funding, coordination at the local level, monitoring and oversight, and the security of humanitarian aid workers; and ongoing projects, among them the organization of a conference on nationality and statelessness, in conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the updating of the IPU handbooks *Respect for international humanitarian law* and *Refugee protection: A guide to international refugee law*. The Committee had also decided that its next session in Geneva would be dedicated to a more fully-fledged discussion of the Committee's mandate and working methods, as well as its actions at and in between Assemblies.

Election of four members
(CL/196/12(e)-P.1 to P.3)

The President drew attention to documents CL/196/12(e)-P.1 to P.3, which provided details of three candidatures received for the four positions of member of the Committee, namely those of Ms. N. Ali Assegaf (Indonesia), Mr. M.R.H. Harraj (Pakistan) and Mr. T. Ravn (Denmark). He took it that the Council would wish to elect those three candidates, in which case the remaining fourth position would be filled at the next session in October 2015.

It was so decided.

(f) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/196/12(f)-R.1)

Ms. R. Kadaga (Uganda), member of the Gender Partnership Group, drew attention to the statistical information set out in the Group's report (CL/196/12(f)-R.1), noting that, at 28 per cent, the proportion of women delegates at the present Assembly was the lowest in recent years and could be bettered, notwithstanding that it was perhaps attributable to the high number of delegations in attendance. Of the 16 all-male delegations, 5 were now subject to sanctions and efforts would be made to ascertain the reasons for the absence of women from their composition and to provide support for remedying that situation.

She further outlined the information reported concerning the Group's initial review of the IPU Statutes and Rules in the light of the IPU's gender mainstreaming policy; its meeting with the delegation from Palau, one of five parliaments with no women members, in order to explore with it means of promoting women's political participation; and ways of harnessing the opportunity of the two upcoming gatherings of Speakers of parliament to showcase IPU's immense work and future ambitions in the area of gender mainstreaming.

(g) Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
(CL/196/12(g)-R.1 and R.2)

Ms. L. Davies (Canada), President of the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, delivered the Group's report on its recent meeting in Hanoi, as contained in document CL/196/12(g)-R.1, and additionally outlined the Group's activities detailed in the IPU's annual report for 2014. Those activities had included a briefing for parliamentarians in Swaziland on the prevention and treatment of paediatric HIV/AIDS; the conduct of a dialogue on the parliamentary role in the fight against the disease between Kyrgyz parliamentarians, the IPU and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); and the organization of a parliamentary meeting during the XX International AIDS Conference in Melbourne, in conjunction with the IPU, UNAIDS and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Lastly, it had conducted the successful field visit to Viet Nam described in document CL/196/12(g)-R.2.

Mr. H.H. Vu (Viet Nam), speaking on the HIV/AIDS situation in his country, provided statistical information on reported cases of HIV/AIDS since 1990, deaths from HIV/AIDS and the downward trend in new infections, currently standing at up to 14,000 annually. The total number of HIV/AIDS cases was nonetheless increasing across Viet Nam, notably among high-risk groups, with almost 93,000 individuals receiving antiretroviral treatment. Improved prevention activities and greater mobilization of domestic resources were among the measures pursued in order to sustain the national response to HIV/AIDS, in which his National Assembly played an important role by, inter alia, enacting and overseeing the implementation of laws on HIV/AIDS prevention and control; securing adequate budgetary and other resources for HIV/AIDS prevention and control; working to combat stigmatization and discrimination relating to HIV/AIDS; and rallying international support for the fight against the disease.

A video depicting the efforts of Viet Nam towards the target of ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2030 was screened.

(h) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/196/12(h)-R.1)

The President, underscoring the importance of reaching out to the new generation of young people, taking into account their views and involving them in decision-making, took the opportunity to encourage attendance at the upcoming IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Tokyo.

Mr. F.A. Al-Tenajji (United Arab Emirates), rapporteur of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU, in presenting the report on the Forum's recent one-day meeting in Hanoi (CL/196/12(h)-R.1), noted that young women had accounted for only one quarter of the 50 participants and called for steps aimed at improving that record in future. He highlighted matters discussed by the Forum, as described in the report, among them the two Standing Committee items on cyberwarfare and water governance, with emphasis on the youth perspective; participation in the work of the Assembly in order to bring that perspective to bear, which was regrettably lacking in the resolution adopted on the emergency item relating to organizations known to target young persons specifically for recruitment to terrorism; agreed action for ensuring that the youth perspective was in future reflected in draft resolutions; and the growing role of Forum members in international youth affairs, including in such events as the IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Tokyo to be held in May 2015.

The President, agreeing that participation in IPU activities must be promoted among parliamentarians under 45 years of age in the interest of ensuring that their views were reflected, suggested that the number of young parliamentarians in delegations participating in the Assembly should in future be placed on record, much as in the case of women.

The Governing Council took note of the activities of committees and other bodies.

LAUNCH OF THE COMMON PRINCIPLES FOR SUPPORT TO PARLIAMENTS

The President drew attention to the booklet *Common Principles for Support to Parliaments*, which set out one general and nine specific Common Principles to be taken into account in the design and management of support for parliaments. Adopted at the 131st Assembly following their development by a working group comprising representatives of the European Parliament, the French National Assembly, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and UNDP, those Principles drew on lessons learned in the area of providing support for parliamentary reform, modernization and efficiency efforts. He expressed gratitude for the funding support provided for the process by the Swedish International Development Agency and Worldwide Support for Development and looked forward to universal support for the Principles, which had thus far received 66 endorsements.

Turning to the panel discussion organized to mark the launch ceremony, he introduced the four representatives of the working group members who would take part, namely: Mr. D. Papadimoulis (European Parliament); Ms. C. Luquiens (France); Mr. S. Hubli (NDI); and Ms. S. Beavers (UNDP). The discussion would be moderated by Mr. P. Herminie (Seychelles).

The Moderator took the Chair.

The Moderator asked why the Common Principles placed such emphasis on strong partnership and the need for beneficiary parliaments to take responsibility for their own development.

Ms. C. Luquiens (France), Panellist, replied that attainment of the desired goal of a functioning democratic parliament depended on strong partnership, based on cooperation, mutual trust and respect, open-mindedness and equality, between beneficiary parliaments and those providing them with technical assistance and support, which would furthermore succeed only if delivered on the basis of needs identified by the parliaments concerned as appropriate to their own development. Coordination of support received was another area in which beneficiary parliaments must be engaged with the aim of preventing duplications and inconsistencies. Certainly, the Common Principles would play a key role in streamlining inter-parliamentary cooperation.

The Moderator asked why the Common Principles underlined the inclusiveness of differing political tendencies and also requested an example of such inclusiveness.

Mr. S. Hubli (NDI) said that the delivery of support and assistance to all political tendencies fully engaged in democratic practices was an essential premise of the Common Principles, as to differentiate would undermine the representative function on which the legitimacy of parliaments was largely based. Political inclusiveness in the provision of such support was also a matter of respect for the institution concerned, the aim being to strengthen the democratic nature of that institution as a whole, rather than any one of its individual political elements. Parliaments should ideally work to develop through multiparty discussion and consensus, as well as in regular consultation with all political tendencies in their make-up. Inclusive support not only differed on the basis of need but also took into account nuances relating to gender equality and the representation of minorities and marginalized groups, as explained in the booklet setting out the Common Principles.

The Moderator requested information about the democracy support programme run by the European Parliament.

Mr. D. Papadimoulis (European Parliament) said that the European Parliament was firmly committed to the application of higher standards in collaboration with partner parliaments and that its authority and expertise in the area of democracy building and democracy support derived from its direct democratic mandate. Its work in that area focused on the establishment of closer links between democratic elections and the creation of democratic institutions as part of a systematic and coherent democracy-building process, which rested on a comprehensive democracy support approach aimed at promoting democracy by enhancing the effectiveness of democracy support activities, including those relating to election observation, parliamentary assistance and human rights actions. The European Parliament stood ready to engage in friendly cooperation with the IPU for the step-by-step implementation of the Common Principles.

The Moderator, with reference to Common Principle 3 relating to sustainable outcomes, asked what elements were essential to ensuring sustainability in the provision of parliamentary support.

Ms. S. Beavers (UNDP) replied that the predictable and timely delivery of parliamentary support in the light of electoral, legislative and other parliamentary timetables was among the key elements in the long-term and ongoing process of strengthening and sustaining parliaments. Parliamentary development actions must also be appropriately sequenced and paced for sustainability, particularly in the case of highly political interventions, and be underpinned at each phase by the firm commitment of new parliamentary stakeholders.

Local political ownership and engagement grounded in international standards constituted another critical sustainability element through ensuring that the implementation, design and monitoring of support for parliamentary development corresponded to needs, taking into account the relevant constitutional system and political background shaping the institutional environment. Indeed, parliamentary development activities attracted greater interest and support if tied to local issues or rooted in a parliament's own development plans.

A third essential element of sustainability was capacity-building aimed at lifting the parliamentary institution as a whole, with self-assessment serving as a useful tool in that endeavour. Given the role of staff in the development of strong, dynamic and effective, priority must be given to merit-based recruitment and retention measures, including appropriate employment contracts and protection guarantees.

The President resumed the Chair.

The President, with reference to the coming post-launch stage, emphasized the importance of strategic partnerships to the delivery of requirements and to meeting the high expectations of parliaments in that they would essentially translate into action the outcome of the phenomenal work of the partners involved in developing the Common Principles and ensure parliamentary ownership of the implementation process. In the post-2015 development era, the Common Principles would set the benchmark for the engagement of the IPU and all stakeholders in parliamentary capacity-building. The IPU indeed looked forward to continuing its association with those partners.

Item 5 of the agenda
(continued)

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President, reporting on the activities of the Executive Committee during the three meetings it had held since the previous Council sitting, said that, in addition to matters already covered under the relevant agenda items, the Committee had considered in detail the situation of certain parliaments, including those of Burkina Faso and Thailand. Following an in-depth examination of information provided, it had decided not to change the membership status of those two parliaments but to impose a specific time frame for the ending of their respective transitional parliamentary arrangements. It had furthermore taken note of the

elections due to take place in Burkina Faso before the end of 2015 and, in the case of Thailand, looked forward to implementation of the road map for returning the country to democracy in the hope that a new democratically elected parliament could be welcomed by the time of the 134th IPU Assembly in March 2016. Those messages had been conveyed to the respective delegations.

The Executive Committee had also noted the information provided by the Secretary General concerning his exploratory mission to the Syrian Arab Republic in January 2015. After a prolonged exchange of views, the Executive Committee had decided to recommend that a fully-fledged parliamentary fact-finding mission be dispatched to Syria in the coming three months. As stipulated in the related resolution adopted at the 126th IPU Assembly in April 2012, the primary purpose of such a mission would be to examine the humanitarian situation arising from the ongoing conflict. More detailed terms of reference for the mission would be finalized through e-mail consultations with Executive Committee members, while its composition would be established in consultation with the geopolitical groups, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law. The mission findings would then be reported at the 133rd Assembly in Geneva. The view was that the IPU should continue to assist the Syrian Parliament, as one of its Members, in building its capacity to discharge its responsibilities in representing the interests of the entire Syrian people in an inclusive manner.

The Committee was additionally informed of the endeavours by the Secretary General to build on previous IPU efforts to promote cooperation and dialogue between the Parliaments of the Republic of Korea and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea in order to foster a climate conducive to efforts for reuniting the two countries. The Committee had mandated the Secretary General to pursue those efforts. The Secretary General would report on the outcome of his consultations on the matter at the 133rd Assembly.

Lastly, the Committee had taken note of the position of Venezuela, as conveyed to it in writing by the Venezuelan delegation, concerning a recent executive order by United States President Obama in which Venezuela was declared to be a national security threat.

The Governing Council took note of the report of the President on the activities of the Executive Committee.

Item 7 of the agenda

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

(CL/196/7-R.1)

- (a) **Regional Seminar on *Promoting child nutrition in Asia*** (CL/196/7(a)-R.1)
- (b) **Parliamentary meeting at the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)** (CL/196/7(b)-R.1)
- (c) **Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations** (CL/196/7(c)-R.1)
- (d) **Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP20/CMP10)** (CL/196/7(d)-R.1)
- (e) **Parliamentary Roundtable during the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons** (CL/196/7(e)-R.1)
- (f) **Annual 2015 session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO** (CL/196/7(f)-R.1)
- (g) **Regional Seminar on *Translating international human rights commitments into national realities: The contribution of parliaments to the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council*** (CL/196/7(g)-R.1)

Following introductory remarks by the IPU Secretary General, **Mr. N. Colmenares (Philippines)**, presented the report contained in document CL/196/7(g)-R.1 on the two-day regional seminar hosted by his Parliament in February 2015. He said that participants had been introduced to the universal periodic review mechanism of the United Nations Human Rights Council and, through three national case studies, to the role of parliamentarians and other actors therein. He outlined the recommendations described in the report, relating inter alia to dialogue and consultation with all stakeholders; continuing human rights education and public information campaigns; and the creation of independent national and regional human

rights institutions and mechanisms, as well as parliamentary oversight committees in the area of human rights. Participants had concluded that the involvement of parliamentarians in the compilation of national human rights reports enhanced their awareness of gaps in the implementation of human rights laws and of their legislative duty, as representatives of truth, justice and the people, to take budgetary and other measures accordingly.

- (h) **Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women** (CL/196/7(h)-R.1)
- (i) **Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction** (CL/196/7(i)-R.1)

The Secretary General, providing an overview of the results of the seven global and two regional IPU specialized meetings held in eight different countries over the previous year, directed Members to the IPU website for the full reports of the meetings (<http://www.ipu.org/conf-e/132agnd.htm#doc-cnl>) With the aid of a slide presentation, he highlighted the contribution of those meetings to implementation of the IPU Strategy 2012-2017 by outlining the main conclusions and recommendations, set out in document CL/196/7-R.1, produced from the one meeting relating to strategic objective 2 (Advance gender equality); the two meetings relating to strategic objective 3 (Protect and promote human rights); the two meetings relating to strategic objective 4 (Parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations and other multilateral institutions); the three meetings relating to strategic objective 5 (Build parliamentary support for international development goals); and the one meeting relating to strategic objective 6 (Contribute to peacebuilding and conflict prevention).

The President, speaking with reference to the pressing issues of climate change and disaster risk reduction covered by two of those specialized meetings, urged Members to take advantage of the new recognition of the important role of parliaments in adding value to the concerned processes, as signalled by their increasing inclusion in delegations to major global gatherings on those issues. Looking forward to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in December 2015, he further invited input to the plan of action currently being prepared by the IPU for assisting implementation of the climate change process, in conjunction with interested partners.

In the area of disaster risk reduction, efforts to build disaster resilience and response capacities on the basis of country risk profiles were vital to preventing and reducing losses, particularly in view of the growing number of high-frequency high-impact events. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, moreover, highlighted the role of the IPU and parliamentarians in supporting that process through appropriate legislative action and budgetary allocations. In short, the IPU would continue to engage in the three related processes of disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainable development, working for a coherent approach and encouraging parliaments to follow suit.

The Governing Council took note of the reports on recent IPU specialized meetings.

Item 8 of the agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IPU STRATEGY 2012-2017

- (a) **Strategic objective 1: Strengthen democracy through parliaments**
(CL/196/8(a)-P.1)

The Secretary General, noting that many aspects of the present and indeed subsequent sub-items had been covered under item 7 of the agenda, outlined the matters addressed in document CL/196/8(a)-R.1, including the call for wide endorsement of the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments; preparation of a second Global Parliamentary Report, to which input would be welcome; measures for enhancing youth participation in parliament; and activities under way for strengthening democracy through parliaments.

(b) Strategic objective 2: Advance gender equality
(CL/196/8(b)-P.1)

The Secretary General, drawing attention to document CL/196/8(b)-P.1 relating to strategic objective 2, summarized with the aid of a slide presentation the substantial progress achieved in women's political representation since adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, as indicated in the three IPU publications *Women in parliament over 20 years*, *Women in parliament in 2014* and *Map on women in politics 2015*. Figures were now stagnating, however, and the Beijing+20 review should thus serve to promote more robust measures for further advancement towards gender equality.

After additionally highlighting progress achieved in implementation of the IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments and in combating discrimination and violence against women, he suggested that the Council might wish to endorse a call for action, "Women leaders: Time to step up for gender equality", made at a recent high-level event hosted by UN Women and the Chilean Government, which he himself had attended.

The President, concurring with that suggestion, proposed that the call for action be endorsed.

It was so agreed.

The President stressed the importance of moving beyond statistical analyses alone towards the provision of post-election support to women parliamentarians with a view to enhancing the quality of their delivery and performance, in line with public expectations, in order to promote their re-election.

The Secretary General said that the possibility of providing such support would be explored.

(c) Strategic objective 3: Protect and promote human rights
(CL/196/8(c)-P.1)

The Secretary General gave an overview of the human rights-related activities described in document CL/196/8(c)-P.1, which related to enhancing the capacity of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to address human rights issues; strengthening the contribution of parliaments to the promotion and protection of human rights; helping parliaments to ensure respect for children's rights; and adopting a human rights approach to the work of the IPU.

(d) Strategic objective 5: Build parliamentary support for international development goals - Contribution to the post-2015 development agenda
(CL/196/8(d)-P.1)

The Secretary General, with reference to document CL/196/8(d)-P.1 detailing the IPU's contribution to the post-2015 development agenda, underlined the efforts aimed at advancing the Millennium Development Goals relating to maternal, newborn and child health and HIV/AIDS.

The President, concluding the item, stated that feedback stemming from such reports provided a firm basis for follow-up action with parliaments.

The Governing Council took note of the progress reports relating to implementation of the IPU Strategy 2012-2017.

Item 9 of the agenda

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
(CL/196/9/R.1 and R.2.rev)

The President drew attention to document CL/196/9-R.1, which provided an overview of activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations system in the six months since the previous Assembly. Also informing the Council that the Executive Committee recommended approval of a proposal for the IPU to partner with the World Future Council and the United Nations concerning the 2015 Future Policy Award on children's rights, he said he took it that the Council would wish to approve that proposal.

It was so decided.

A delegate from Sweden, speaking with reference to a United Nations General Assembly resolution on international cooperation against the world drug problem cited in paragraph 10 of the document under consideration, asked how parliamentarians could hope to participate in the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly on that problem now that the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security had decided against placing on its future agenda an item on the problem, as proposed by the Mexican and Swedish delegations. It was important to take advantage of such opportunities for closer cooperation with the United Nations as and when they arose and indeed to deliver on the drug issue.

The Secretary General said that, notwithstanding its decision to place another proposed item on its agenda, the Standing Committee had the option of arranging an expert hearing on the world drug problem during its next session in Geneva. The organization of a specialized meeting by parliaments with a particular interest in the subject was another option.

The President encouraged delegations to take full advantage of all options available to them within the IPU framework for tabling important issues, especially in view of the growing number of topics being proposed for discussion.

Turning to document CL/196/9-R.2.rev, he said that the revised draft cooperation agreement with the United Nations contained therein now included additional areas of activity in order to reflect the expanding scope of future cooperation between the two Organizations. If endorsed, the draft agreement would serve as a basis for negotiation with the United Nations, following which a further draft reflecting the outcome of that negotiation would be presented to the Council for final approval. He took it that the Council would wish to endorse the draft cooperation agreement.

It was so agreed.

The Governing Council took note of the report on cooperation with the United Nations system.

Item 11 of the agenda

**ACTION BY THE IPU TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY
AND PARLIAMENTARY INSTITUTIONS**

The President said that the item had already been fully covered under item 8(a) of the agenda, concerning strategic objective 1: *Strengthen democracy through parliaments*.

Item 13 of the agenda

**PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE OF
SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT**

The Secretary General, reporting on the progress of preparations for the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, said that, following extensive discussions with the United Nations Secretary-General and members of his senior management team at the second of its two recent meetings, the Preparatory Committee had confirmed that the Conference would be held from 31 August to 2 September at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The idea was that it would thus serve to generate parliamentary input to the work of the United Nations summit meeting for adoption of the post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be held shortly thereafter. All Speakers and presiding officers of national parliaments were to be invited to participate, as were heads of key international and regional inter-parliamentary organizations, all of whom were urged to apply well in advance for entry visas to the United States. Focused on the overarching theme of peace, democracy and development, an agenda was to be drafted, together with an outcome document, for the consideration of the Preparatory Committee at its June meeting in Geneva, subsequent to which the two texts would be circulated to the IPU membership for comment.

The President added that the work of the present Assembly, including the Hanoi Declaration, would likewise feed into the Conference.

The Governing Council took note of the preparations for the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

Item 14 of the agenda

133rd IPU ASSEMBLY (GENEVA, 17 – 21 OCTOBER 2015)

The President, recalling the provisional agreement to hold the 133rd Assembly in Cartagena, stated that the IPU had since been informed by the Colombian authorities that they were no longer in a position to host that Assembly.

The Secretary General confirmed that, while an IPU mission had returned from Cartagena with a positive report on the facilities available for the purposes of the Assembly, the ability of the Colombian Parliament to host the Assembly had since been diminished by budgetary cuts resulting from the fall in oil prices and the rising value of the United States dollar. It was therefore proposed that the Assembly should instead take place at the International Conference Centre in Geneva, in accordance with the contingency plan established by the Secretary General, from 17 to 21 October 2015.

The President said he took it that the Council would wish to approve that proposal.

It was so decided.

The President added that IPU Members looked forward to the prospect of the 134th Assembly due to take place in Lusaka, Zambia, from 19 to 23 March 2016.

A delegate from Zambia responded that his Parliament and people looked forward to welcoming participants in the 134th Assembly to the country, which was home to such world-class tourist destinations as the magnificent Victoria Falls, one of the seven wonders of the world.

A short film depicting the facilities and sights to be enjoyed in Zambia was screened.

Item 15 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS
(CL/196/15-P.1)

(a) Statutory meetings

The President drew attention to document CL/196/15-P.1, setting out the venues and dates for the 133rd and 134th Assemblies.

The Secretary General, concerning Assemblies thereafter, said that the IPU was open to invitations from potential hosts and that expressions of interest had been received from a number of parliaments, including those of Bangladesh, China, India, Mexico and Rwanda. In the absence of any confirmation, however, and given the importance of long-term planning, the geopolitical groups and Executive Committee members had been called upon to assist in identifying future hosts for either of the IPU's two annual Assemblies.

On a related note, he recalled that no IPU Assembly had been hosted in Europe for 15 years, primarily owing to the existence of European Union travel sanctions against various individuals that precluded fulfilment of the IPU requirement of guaranteed visas for all invited attendees at IPU Assemblies. At the behest of the Executive Committee, he had therefore reviewed that situation by consulting with relevant European actors and authorities, who had mooted the possibility of an exemption from those sanctions, along the lines of those already granted to certain European organizations, on the ground, among others, that IPU Assemblies fostered dialogue, democracy and humanitarian responses to need. The IPU had subsequently been informed by the European Union Presidency, however, that such an exemption was possible only if obtained by a potential host of an IPU Assembly. It had therefore appealed to European Speakers of Parliament for support in pursuing the matter further, underlining the importance of benefiting from good practices developed over centuries in Europe for promoting peace and democracy as the premise for peace and security.

The President, emphasizing the need for a two-year planning window, added that the IPU would place information pertaining to Assembly requirements at the disposal of potential hosts in order to assist their consideration.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) expressed the view that long-term planning would be facilitated by continuing to hold only one of the two annual Assemblies outside Geneva.

(b) Specialized meetings and other events

The Secretary General drew attention to the list of specialized and other meetings also set out in document CL/196/15/P.1, some of which had already been approved by the Council, including the IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Tokyo, in which the participation of parliamentarians under 45 years of age was strongly encouraged. Approval was now sought for the remaining eight meetings listed, which, with the exception of one sponsored by the IPU, were funded from the regular budget or from external sources and thus had no cost implications. Provisional approval was also sought for a proposal recently received from the Parliament of Pakistan to host a regional meeting on terrorism and human rights.

The President said he took it that the Council would wish to approve the list of specialized and other meetings and provisionally to approve the Pakistani proposal, pending finalization of the necessary arrangements.

It was so decided.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) asked why the usual annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, an important meeting for the IPU membership, did not feature in the list for November 2015.

The Secretary General explained that early 2016 had been proposed as an alternative date for the Parliamentary Hearing, the reason being that it would allow not only for an interlude after the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament but also for taking into account the new SDGs.

Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden) stated that the many parliamentarians not participating in the World Conference would wish to convene as usual in November in order to be apprised of information essential to their own long-term planning needs.

The President replied that the possibility of holding the Parliamentary Hearing in 2015, subject to budgetary considerations, would be explored in the light of the concern over the timeliness of such information.

A delegate from Chad expressed puzzlement concerning the 10th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament, listed in document CL/196/15-P.1, and the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament; the proximity of the dates for each would suggest an overlap in their respective discussions.

The President stated that the proposed back-to-back scheduling of the two events was for the travel convenience of participants attending both meetings, the first of which was dedicated solely to women's issues and therefore entirely separate from the second.

Ms. B. Mbete (South Africa) agreed that the proposed scheduling was indeed convenient but wondered why the meetings should be convened in New York.

The Secretary General responded that, insofar as the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament would focus its discussions mainly on the parliamentary contribution to the post-2015 development agenda, it had been considered expedient to create a linkage with the United Nations summit meeting for adoption of the post-2015 SDGs by holding the Conference shortly before that event and in the same location in order to profit from the world attention that would inevitably be directed towards New York at that time.

Item 16 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (CL/196/16-P.1 to P.3)

(cf. Article 23 of the IPU Statutes and Rules 37, 38 and 39 of the Rules of the Governing Council)

The President drew attention to the candidatures received for the three vacant positions on the Executive Committee, as set out in documents CL/196/16-P.1 to P.3, namely those of Mr. S. Suzuki (Japan), Mrs. A. Habibou (Niger) and Mr. N. Schrijver (Netherlands). He took it that the Council would wish to elect those three candidates as members of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

The President congratulated the candidates on their election and declared closed the 196th session of the Governing Council.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.