



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
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## Report of the President

### (a) On his activities since the 197<sup>th</sup> session of the Governing Council

In my capacity as President of the IPU, my official duties have taken me to various regions of the world over the past six months. During my travels, I have endeavoured to reach out to our Members, to enlist their support and to build new ties of friendship or deepen existing ones. I have been in regular contact with the Secretary General and his colleagues on a number of dossiers on the Organization's radar screen.

Following the 133<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly, I held consultations with the IPU Secretary General and his senior management team at IPU Headquarters in Geneva. Among other things we discussed how to raise the profile of the Organization. I proposed to explore the idea of establishing IPU TV and a Web application that could be uploaded on mobile devices. These two media could be used to enhance our outreach to Members and non-Members alike. The idea has been enthusiastically received by Member Parliaments in my interactions with them.

In follow-up to the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, a five-yearly event, I proposed that the IPU endeavour to keep the Speakers of Parliament engaged throughout the five-year cycle by organizing regional events on the SDGs. The idea would be to focus on Goal 16, on governance, and zero in on a target that was of special interest to each region. I expressed the hope that such events could be held in the six geopolitical groups over the next five years.

One such commitment took me to Beijing from 8 to 13 November, at the invitation of the Chairman of the National People's Congress of China, Mr. Zhang Dejiang. China had recently announced a substantial donation to the IPU and my visit was intended to cement the strong ties between the IPU and China and further develop our cooperation at the institutional level. I met with both senior government and parliamentary officials and reiterated the IPU's gratitude for China's generosity. I assured them that the funds would be put to good use: to build the capacity of parliaments in the developing world so they could deliver on the SDGs. I expressed the hope that other Members would follow China's example in providing additional support to the IPU. I also told the authorities in Beijing that the IPU was facing a shortage of potential hosts and would be delighted for Beijing to host another IPU Assembly.

At the invitation of the President of the Latin American and Caribbean Parliament (Parlatino), Ms. Blanca Alcalá, I travelled to Panama from 25 to 28 November. The purpose of my visit was to forge closer ties between the Organization and the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC). I addressed the 31<sup>st</sup> General Assembly of Parlatino on 27 November, urging the representatives of 23 national parliaments from the region to work more closely with the IPU on dealing with the global issues of the day and on the impact of political violence on the safety of citizens. That was a major concern for Latin America. I also held meetings with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Ms. María Luisa Navarro. During my visit, I discussed strengthening the Panamanian Parliament's engagement on international affairs with the Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Rubén de León Sánchez.

Our discussions focused on the need to interlock and integrate action on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate change and disaster risk reduction in national development plans.

I went to Budapest at the invitation of the President of the Hungarian National IPU Group, Mr. Mihály Balla, from 29 November to 2 December 2015, to attend a special session in parliament to commemorate the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Hungarian National Group of the IPU. As a founding Member of the IPU, this was a landmark anniversary and was commemorated inter alia by the minting of a special coin. I participated in the opening ceremony of the IPU photo exhibition, which had been translated into Hungarian for the occasion. The parliament had recently moved to new premises, where I addressed the special session. In my opening remarks, I thanked Hungary for its pioneering role as one of the first parliaments to join the IPU and attend its first Conference in 1889. Since then, Hungary had been a very active Member of the IPU and continued to make rich contributions to the Organization's work. During my visit, I also met with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of State for Economic Diplomacy, the Minister of State for Family and Youth Affairs, the Speaker of the National Assembly and the Chairperson of the Foreign Affairs Committee. It was very heartening to see how engaged this longstanding Member of the IPU continued to be. Hungary could serve as a good role model for other IPU Members in terms of remaining active and committed towards the organization.

I participated in the Parliamentary Meeting organized by the IPU and the French Parliament on the occasion of the COP21 Climate Change Summit in Paris in December. The event, held on 5 and 6 December in the French National Assembly and the Senate, committed MPs from nearly 90 countries to vigorous action and adopted a political statement on the need to step up climate action.

The parliamentary meeting also considered a Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change - a roadmap for MPs - with clear targets on enacting the Paris Agreement and introducing or amending other laws as necessary. The Action Plan makes recommendations on mechanisms for overseeing government policies, as well as for ensuring adequate financing for the implementation of the Paris Agreement as key aspects of parliaments' responsibilities in ensuring the climate change targets are met.

In my inaugural address, I underscored the critical role of parliamentarians in delivering on the aspirational and challenging climate change agenda. I stressed our wish to safeguard ourselves and future generations from climate chaos in our quest for a greener and safer planet, advancing along a path of sustainable carbon-neutral development. I nevertheless offered words of caution: "If we fail, we will be failing not just ourselves, but also future generations". I am pleased that our words as an Organization and the words of so many world leaders were heeded, and that a globally agreed climate pact was agreed in Paris on 8 December 2015. It was indeed a historic feat.

I travelled to Egypt on 21 January 2016 at the invitation of the Speaker of the Arab Parliament, Mr. Ahmed Al-Garawan, located at the Headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo. I also met with the President of Egypt, Mr. Al-Sissi, to discuss the full resumption of relations between the Egyptian Parliament and the IPU following the recent elections held in the country. We discussed the counter-terrorism dossier on the IPU's radar screen and I invited Egypt to play a more active role on that front.

In my exchanges with the Speaker and the newly elected Members of Parliament, we discussed the value of the IPU's engagement with all parliaments – Members and non-Members – especially during difficult periods. In particular, we discussed capacity-building for the parliament, training for parliamentary staff, investing in IT infrastructure and upgrading the library and research services.

I underscored the long history that existed between the IPU and Egypt, which was the first Arab country to join the IPU in 1924. The Parliament had always played a very active role in the IPU and one of its distinguished Speakers, Mr. Ahmed Fathi Sorour, had been elected President of the IPU from 1994 to 1997. I also visited the House of Representatives and attended a part of the afternoon plenary sitting. In my discussions with the Speaker, I invited a delegation from the parliament, pending formal reaffiliation to the IPU, to attend the annual IPU-UN Parliamentary Hearing in New York on 7-8 February.

We also discussed the ongoing IPU programme of support to the parliamentary Secretariat. The Speaker called for training not only for parliamentary staffers and researchers but also for individual MPs. On learning that close to 200 newly elected MPs were between the age of 34 and 44, I encouraged the Speaker to engage more with the IPU on the youth empowerment dossier, in particular to send a delegation of young MPs to the Conference of Young Parliamentarians that would take place just before the next IPU Assembly on 15-16 March in Lusaka.

I participated in the first ever South Asian Speakers' Summit on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, jointly organized by the IPU and the Bangladesh Parliament with the support of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids in my home town of Dhaka on 30 and 31 January. In my opening remarks, I underscored the importance of the SDGs not just to the global community as a whole, but to each specific region, not least Asia. The region alone could determine its approach for addressing and implementing the new goals. In the Outcome Declaration, the South Asian Speakers advocated for ownership of the goals, with a particular focus on the health-related goal. They undertook to address the tobacco epidemic in the region and to devise key policies to reduce tobacco consumption in Asia. Other regional events on the SDGs were planned for Uruguay in the GRULAC region and Romania for Eastern Europe later in 2016.

The annual IPU-UN Parliamentary Hearing took me to New York in early February. The theme of this year's edition, "The world drug problem: Taking stock and strengthening the response", was chosen to feed into the UN General Assembly Special Session on Drugs (UNGASS) that would take place in April. In my opening remarks, I told the senior UN officials and parliamentarians that the global drug problem was a shared responsibility and that the problem would not go away on its own. Only a concerted and robust response by all stakeholders would lead to a reduction of both supply and demand, along with the attendant problems of trafficking, money laundering, organized crime and funding of terrorist activities. It was important to remember that first and foremost, this was a problem of public health and welfare.

During the Hearing, I met the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon. He expressed his appreciation for the contribution of parliaments and their members to all major global processes and the value-added of the IPU as the umbrella organization of the parliamentary community. Mr. Ban also underscored the need to strengthen the institutional relationship between the United Nations and the IPU.

To mark World Day of Social Justice, I was invited to address the Social Justice Parliamentary Forum organized by the House of Councillors of Morocco in Rabat on 19 and 20 February. The celebrations were held under the theme "Promoting human dignity for a life in unity". In my address, I underscored the role of parliaments in promoting social justice. I also pointed to the crucial need to work together with other stakeholders, such as government, the private sector and civil society, to broaden and enrich the debate on social justice. Only by recognizing and fulfilling their respective roles, notably through honouring international commitments, could real justice for the people be achieved.

I travelled to Saudi Arabia on 21 February at the invitation of the Speaker of the Consultative Council to discuss how to strengthen the institutional ties between the Council and the IPU. Among other topics, we discussed women's participation in politics and their representation in parliament, as well as their economic empowerment. The issue of youth participation in decision-making was also raised.