



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

CL/198/SR.1
23 May 2016

Summary records of the Governing Council

198th session

20 and 23 March 2016

Mulungushi International Convention Centre (MICC)
Lusaka (Zambia)

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First sitting

Sunday, 20 March 2016

The meeting was called to order at 9.10 a.m., with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Mr. Saber Chowdhury (Bangladesh), in the Chair.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (CL/198/A.1)

The provisional agenda (CL/198/A.1) was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 197th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (CL/197/SR.1)

The summary records of the 197th session of the Governing Council (CL/197/SR.1) were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

PROPOSALS FOR THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 134th ASSEMBLY

Ms. G. Eldegard (Norway), seconded by delegates from Bahrain, Namibia and the United Kingdom, nominated Mr. P. Matibini, President of the National Assembly of Zambia, as President of the 134th IPU Assembly. This proposal was endorsed.

Item 4 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP AND OBSERVER STATUS

(a) Requests for affiliation and reaffiliation to the IPU (CL/198/4(a)-P.1)

The President, drawing attention to the decisions set out in document CL/198/4(a)-P.1 in favour of requests for reaffiliation submitted by the Parliaments of Egypt and Comoros and a request for affiliation submitted by the Parliament of Guyana, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve those three decisions, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Mr. A. Abd El Aal (Egypt) said that it was an honour for the Egyptian Parliament to resume its long-standing membership of the IPU and in turn its well-known role in the area of parliamentary diplomacy. It was now a strong institution representing all segments of Egyptian society in a manner unprecedented throughout its 150-year history, with the number of both young and women parliamentarians at an all-time high. The difficult task of establishing and maintaining the rule of law and protecting citizens' rights was, however, exacerbated by circumstances in the region, where peace would remain elusive in the absence of a just and negotiated solution to the Palestinian question. Parliamentary diplomacy could be usefully harnessed for the creation of peace opportunities and permanent open channels of dialogue, as well as in the context of concerted action against terrorism and extremism. He commended the IPU for its capacity-building support to the Egyptian parliamentary Secretariat and staff over the previous two years.

The President commented that the IPU would continue to offer that support, noting that even parliaments without current IPU membership benefited greatly from continuing engagement with the IPU in the sense that it helped to equip them for dealing with arising challenges.

Mr. A. Ousseni (Comoros) said that it was a proud moment for his Parliament to be welcomed back into the IPU fold and expressed gratitude for the support it had received for its reaffiliation, in particular from the parliamentary authorities of Kuwait. As a small country with territorial waters that were difficult to police, the Comoros was strategically fragile and vulnerable to terrorism. Its Parliament truly appreciated the decision to approve its readmission to the IPU and the renewed opportunity thus provided for it to work in that context with its global counterparts.

The President, referring to the decision to admit the Parliament of Guyana to the IPU, said that no delegation from Guyana was participating in the present session and that its delegation would therefore be given the opportunity to speak under the same item at the Council's next session in Geneva.

Concerning the further decision likewise set out in document CL/198/4(a)-P.1 in favour of a request for associate membership submitted by the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS), he said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve that decision, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Mr. I. Umakhanov (IPA CIS), speaking on behalf of the Chairperson of the IPA CIS Council, welcomed the decision to enhance the status of the IPA CIS to that of Associate Member of the IPU, conducive as it would be the establishment of an effective framework for the exchange of information, expertise and best practices between the two institutions, as well as for the organization of joint events and projects. In looking ahead to fruitful cooperation of that nature, he extended an invitation for the IPU President to attend the forthcoming IPA CIS Assembly in May.

The President replied that he too looked forward to the mutual benefits to be gained from the new relationship, adding that the IPU now comprised 170 Members and 11 Associate Members as a result of the decisions just adopted by the Governing Council. The IPU would pursue its efforts to build on those record figures, which he said were indicative of the growing confidence in the IPU.

(b) Situation of certain parliaments

The Secretary General, reported on the situation of 11 parliaments under scrutiny by the IPU, on account of their countries undergoing political transition or crisis which affected or might affect the functioning of and additionally communicated the related decisions recommended for approval by the Council.

He outlined the case of Burkina Faso, where the transitional legislature established following the coup d'état in 2012 had now been replaced by a new fully-fledged parliament. It was therefore recommended that the Parliament of Burkina Faso be removed from the list of parliaments under scrutiny.

Concerning Burundi, where turmoil had erupted in response to the decision of the incumbent President to run for a third term of office, it now had a functioning bicameral parliament following the elections held in mid-2015. Taking into account the findings of a recent IPU mission dispatched to explore the situation and the potential contribution of the IPU to resolving the country's political crisis, the recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor developments and engage with the Parliament of Burundi, including through a meeting with its Speaker of the National Assembly during the current Assembly, in the interest of assisting a return to normalcy.

In the Central African Republic, the transitional process under way since the coup of 2013 had been delayed but was now approaching completion following the adoption of a new constitution providing for the establishment of a bicameral parliament. With the second round of parliamentary elections shortly due to take place, the recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor developments until the transitional process was finally completed.

In respect of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, questions surrounding the eligibility of the current Head of State to run for a further term of office had sparked violence that threatened to derail the democratic process, including the parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2016. The recommendation therefore was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation closely while also urging, in the interest of an outcome acceptable to all, the conduct of free, fair and credible elections in an atmosphere of peace and calm.

With regard to Haiti, where the situation had remained in flux since 2015 owing to the absence of elections to replace those parliamentarians whose terms of office had expired, a fully-functioning parliament was now in place following recent elections. It was therefore recommended that the Parliament of Haiti should be removed from the list of parliaments under scrutiny and that the IPU should furthermore engage with that Parliament in order to strengthen its functioning and hence its capacity for discharging its mandate.

In the peculiar case of Libya, where two parallel parliaments were currently operating, the reigning political instability and security concerns had thus far prevented implementation of the technical assistance agreement signed by the IPU with the internationally recognized Parliament based in Tobruk. The IPU nonetheless remained committed to providing technical assistance as soon as circumstances permitted. The recommendation was that, in the interim, the IPU should continue to monitor the situation while also advocating a successful conclusion to the peace talks aimed at the establishment of a single structure for governing the country.

In Madagascar, the Parliament was now fully functioning following the conduct of elections for the Senate after a two-year hiatus. It was therefore recommended that the IPU should continue to provide support for consolidating the functions of the bicameral parliament, with which it was in fact already engaged.

As to the Syrian Arab Republic, the IPU had pursued its attempts to foster dialogue and reconciliation in a bid to ease the crisis of civil war in that country. It now looked forward to a positive outcome from the peace talks currently taking place under the aegis of the United Nations in the hope that future parliamentary elections would culminate in an institution that reflected the desires and interests of the Syrian people. The recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation closely and continue likewise to engage with the country's Parliament.

Concerning Thailand, the Secretary General outlined the situation that had culminated in rejection of the draft new constitution, in September 2015, and the proposal of a roadmap for elections to take place in July 2017, rather than in March 2016, as had been originally planned. Having remained seized of developments all along through its engagement with the Thai authorities, the IPU had recently conducted a mission to assess progress towards implementation of the roadmap, to which those authorities said they were firmly committed. It also continued to encourage a return to constitutional normalcy, including through the institution of a strong and vibrant parliament, at the earliest possible opportunity. The recommendation was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation through direct contacts with the Thai Parliament.

In the case of Venezuela, two thirds of parliamentary seats were now held by the former opposition coalition following elections held in December 2015. It was widely claimed, however, that the governmental and judicial authorities were engaged in efforts to restrict the functioning of the Parliament. The recommendation therefore was that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation, express solidarity with the Parliament and dispatch a human rights mission to the country, with the addition of a political component aimed at reasserting the imperative for the establishment of a fully-fledged parliamentary institution.

With regard to Yemen, where external parties were also embroiled in the civil war under way since 2012, reliable information was difficult to obtain, although the situation was clearly precarious following the recent ceasefire collapse. It was therefore recommended that the IPU should keep the situation under review and also request information from Members that might help it to ascertain the facts.

The Governing Council took note of information communicated to it in respect of the Parliaments of Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, Madagascar, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Venezuela and Yemen. It approved the recommendations of the Executive Committee on the parliaments in question.

(c) Observer status
(CL/198/4(c)-P.1)

The President, drawing attention to a request for observer status submitted by the Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR) and annexed to document CL/198/4(c)-P.1, said he took it that the Council wished to approve the request, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 5 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

**(a) On his activities since the 197th session of the Governing Council
(CL/198/5(a)-R.1)**

The President, introducing the report on his activities since the 197th session of the Governing Council (CL/198/5(a)-R.1), drew attention to his proposals for raising the IPU's profile through: first, the establishment of IPU TV as a powerful tool for accessing contributions from parliamentarians worldwide; and second, the development of a Web application for use on mobile devices, which chimed with the IPU's new PaperSmart policy and had also been enthusiastically received by young parliamentarians in particular. Adding that the IPU archives dating back to 1889 were to be digitized, offering the potential for access to the full history of the IPU via its website, he continued by highlighting other activities described in the report, including: the organization of regional events relating to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a special focus on the governance-related Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) and on targets of specific interest to each region; and the visits he had made in varying contexts to Beijing, Panama City, Budapest, Paris, Cairo, New York, Rabat and Saudi Arabia.

He also informed Members of other activities in which he had engaged since the finalization of the report, notably the celebrations held to mark the 44th anniversary of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates, where he had been privileged to meet His Highness the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, whose passionate support for the work of parliaments and parliamentary diplomacy had proved inspiring, as had his thoughts on such matters as international humanitarian assistance and the role of youth in current affairs. The Federal National Council had declared itself keen to host future IPU events and was already playing a much-appreciated role in the development of the IPU website, including in the Arabic and Spanish languages. Lastly, he had held preliminary discussions with such bodies as the National Democratic Institute and the International Institute for Environment and Development concerning their potential support in furtherance of the IPU's work.

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President said that most of the subjects discussed by the Executive Committee during the two days of lively discussions it had thus far held in Lusaka, with a further day of discussion yet to take place, would be reported on under the relevant 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 2015**

The Secretary General, presenting his annual report on the activities of the IPU for 2015, noted that additional details pertaining to those activities were available in other documentation prepared for the Assembly, a prime example being the financial report and audited financial statements (CL/198/10-R.1). The array of activities described in the report alone, however, testified to the growing recognition of the IPU and its Members as key players in the international arena, including in the context of major United Nations processes, and indeed displayed its convening power as the global umbrella organization of parliaments. The IPU's profile was further raised, he said, by the increasing involvement in and support for those activities by Members, some of whom he singled out for their contributions on that score. As evident from the report, the issues addressed by the IPU were universal in scope, which again underscored the relevance of heightening the IPU's visibility and promoting outreach to a range of constituencies through such tools as the multilingual website currently under development, as already mentioned, with support from the United Arab Emirates.

In highlighting various aspects of the activities described in the report, he drew particular attention to the IPU's input to the new global development agenda and to its work in the areas of peacebuilding, conflict prevention and statelessness; capacity-building in support of fit-for-purpose parliaments; gender equality, women's rights and violence against women; youth political participation; human rights for all; health; and environment. It had been possible to mobilize additional resources for the implementation of such activities, he said, adding that feedback on the report would be helpful for fine-tuning the IPU's delivery of its services to Members.

The President encouraged Members to read the report and emphasized with respect to efforts aimed at increasing women's political participation that the IPU was also intent on supporting elected women parliamentarians with a view to enhancing the quality of their performance in office. He also cited the impressive example of young Zambian cabinet ministers as an inspiration for young parliamentarians around the world to emulate.

The Governing Council took note of the annual report by the Secretary General.

Item 10 of the agenda

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2015
(CL/198/10-R.1 to R.3)

The Secretary General introduced the IPU's financial report and audited financial statements (CL/198/10-R.1), which he said the external auditors had found to be once again fully compliant with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). He drew attention to the Logframe detailing the impact achieved from the activities described. As indicated in the report, the budget for 2015 had been prepared with a further decrease in Member contributions, voluntary contributions had increased, albeit not as much as anticipated, and the Working Capital Fund was still nominally ahead of the set target. He pointed to the details of revenue set out in the report, as well as to those relating to expenditure, and highlighted the gender analysis showing the IPU's steady performance on that score, with women in the Secretariat continuing to outnumber men at all levels. He urged Members to familiarize themselves with the content of the financial report in order to enhance their understanding of the IPU's workings.

Mr. R. del Picchia (France), Interim Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Finance of the Executive Committee, presenting the report on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2016 (CL/198/10-R.3), said that, having examined the financial statements for 2015, the Sub-Committee shared the opinion of the External Auditor that they gave a true picture of the IPU's financial position. He outlined the content of the report, focusing in particular on the information provided with respect to currency markets, investment yields, the IPU closed Pension Fund, revenues, including from voluntary contributions, and expenditures. While IPU targets had still been met, despite the further reduction in total assessed contributions, he observed that it would make sense to explore a wider range of low-risk investment options with a view to improving returns. The Sub-Committee recommended approval of the financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2015.

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), Internal Auditor, in summarizing the findings set out in his report (CL/198/10-R.2), agreed that the audited financial statements were clearly IPSAS-compliant, had been prepared in accordance with the IPU's Financial Regulations and gave a true picture of the IPU's financial position. He drew attention to causes of the deficit shown in 2015, namely: the fall in revenue owing to the reduction in assessed contributions; the lower-than-expected amount of voluntary contributions; increased spending on temporary staff, including consultants; investment losses; and the ongoing negative impact of the IPU closed Pension Fund. He expressed confidence, however, that any consequences of such factors would be overcome through the professional skills of the IPU's financial administration.

The President welcomed the clean bill of financial health given to the IPU and agreed that those skills would certainly serve to see the IPU through times of financial uncertainty.

Mr. A.Y. Desai (India), expressing concern over the fact that revenues had dwindled since 2014, asked about the specific type of investments that might be sought with a view to rectifying that situation.

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), Internal Auditor, explained in reply the part played in the fall in revenues by the amount of assessed contributions in arrears; if received late, such contributions would instead appear in the budget for the following year. With respect to investments, he confirmed that the aim was to seek more worthwhile returns while resolutely avoiding any speculative or high-risk transactions.

Mr. A.Y. Desai (India) stated his view that the IPU should specifically identify the type of investments to be sought.

The President said that due note was taken of that view, adding that comments relating to all aspects of the IPU's work were to be encouraged.

The Secretary General, stressing the important principles of transparency and accountability, agreed that feedback was vital to improving the financial performance of the IPU, inter alia, and would always be taken into account.

The Governing Council approved the financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2015.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE QUORUM FOR THE 198th SESSION

The Secretary General announced that, in accordance with Rule 34.2 of the Rules of the Governing Council, the quorum of 111 was established for the 198th session on the basis of the participation of 200 members or substitutes in the present meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.10 a.m.

Second sitting

Wednesday, 23 March 2016

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

During the course of the meeting, a number of speakers expressed condolences to the families and friends of victims of the previous day's terrorist attacks in Belgium and voiced solidarity with the Belgian people. At the proposal of the IPU President, the Governing Council paid tribute to the victims by observing a minute of silence.

Item 7 of the agenda

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

- (a) **Conference on *Ensuring Everyone's Right to Nationality: The role of Parliaments in Preventing and Ending Statelessness*, organized with UNHCR**
(CL/198/7(a)-R.1)

Mr. B. Bongo (South Africa), in presenting the report of the Conference on statelessness organized in conjunction with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in November 2015 in Cape Town (CL/198/7(a)-R.1), spoke of the numerous benefits of citizenship denied to the millions around the world who had no nationality. Participants in the conference, he said, had exchanged best practices and identified key actions that parliaments could take to end statelessness. Measures consequently suggested in the plan of action annexed to the report included the review of national legislation; legislative reform; greater engagement in relevant UNHCR activities, such as the #IBelong campaign; and the establishment of an informal parliamentary group for championing that campaign, to which end he called on interested parliamentarians to make themselves known to the IPU Secretariat. He underscored joint action as the key to ending statelessness by the close of the decade.

- (b) **Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP21/CMP11**
(CL/198/7(b)-R.1)

Ms. M. André (France), Executive President of the French Group, introducing the report on the two-day parliamentary meeting held in December 2015 in Paris during the United Nations Climate Change Conference (CL/198/7(b)-R.1), emphasized the significance of the meeting in the light of the major challenges posed by climate change; the successful outcome of the Conference and the responsible commitment of all States alike to the fight against climate change; and the imperative for parliamentarians to engage in that fight, bearing in mind their vital oversight role. She said that the outcome document annexed to the report had been adopted by consensus, notwithstanding the diversity of views exchanged, and served to demonstrate the mobilization capacities of parliamentarians, as did the participation of numerous high-profile personalities in the meeting. Indeed, the event had been such as to inspire the earnest pursuit of climate change activities. She therefore looked forward to another successful Conference of the Parties when it next convened in November 2016 in Morocco.

- (c) **Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations**
(CL/198/7(c)-R.1)

Mr. A. Avsan (Sweden), President of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, drawing attention to the report on the two-day annual Parliamentary Hearing held in February 2016 at the United Nations (CL/198/7(c)-R.1), said that the event had achieved its aim of providing a contribution to the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the world drug problem, thereby representing another advance towards the shared vision of more inclusive international governance. For all the lack of consensus on numerous drug-related issues, the hearing had addressed misunderstandings and set the stage for further political debate. It had also revealed

areas of common ground, which were detailed in the conclusions listed in the report, ultimately sending a clear message concerning the need for all countries to design an integrated and balanced drug control strategy on the basis of a comprehensive review of their respective drug problems. He called on parliamentarians to take action accordingly.

(d) Seminar for African parliaments on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolution 1540
(CL/198/7(d)-R.1)

Mr. T.J.A. Agbre (Côte d'Ivoire), President of the Inter-Parliamentary Group of Côte d'Ivoire, in introducing the report of the two-day seminar held for African parliaments in Abidjan in February 2016 (CL/198/7(d)-R.1), outlined the substance of Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) concerning matters relating to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and their means of delivery, particularly for terrorist purposes, and highlighted operations carried out by terrorist organizations in the African continent, most recently in his own country during the previous week. As mentioned in the report, he said, good practices for effective implementation of the resolution had been identified by participants, who had also drafted a parliamentary action plan set to be distributed, together with the report of the seminar, to all African parliaments in the coming weeks. He urged Members to take on board the resolution and work for its implementation.

(e) Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 60th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, organized with UN Women
(CL/198/7(e)-R.1)

Ms. M.N. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report on the recent one-day parliamentary meeting held in New with the aim of contributing to the session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CL/198/7(e)-R.1), said that the discussion had focused on the issue of legal discrimination against women and girls. She highlighted the salient points of the debate outlined in the report and relating, among others, to major legislative gaps; the responsibility of all parliamentarians of both sexes to repeal discriminatory laws and develop a gender-responsive legal framework; factors affecting the implementation of gender-responsive laws; and the need for education to raise awareness of the benefits of gender equality for all. In the context of the IPU's partnership with UN Women, she also drew attention to the multi-year project envisaged in support of parliamentary efforts to amend and repeal discriminatory laws.

(f) South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals
(CL/198/7(f)-R.1)

The President, introducing the report on the two-day South Asian Speakers' Summit held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in January 2016 (CL/198/7(f)-R.1), stated that the aim of the event had been to underline the key role of parliaments in SDG implementation, with an emphasis on the governance-related Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) as a means of accelerating the achievement of all SDGs. As fully explained in the report, the regional challenge of tobacco control had formed another important focus of discussion and the overall event had proved so valuable that the participants had decided to convene annually in order to review progress in SDG implementation. He therefore suggested it as a model initiative that could be usefully emulated in other regions with a view to actively driving forward the SDG process during the five-year period between World Conferences of Speakers of Parliament.

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 AND PREPARATION OF THE STRATEGY TO FOLLOW

(a) Oral report of the IPU Secretary General on the implementation of the IPU Strategy 2012-2017, including the PaperSmart Initiative (CL/198/8(a)-R.1)

The Secretary General, noting that a report on IPU activities since October 2015 had already been delivered, said that he would focus on activities and events requiring follow-up, starting with the forthcoming second edition of the Global Parliamentary Report, which promised to document on the basis of active consultation the best practices and lessons learned in the area of parliamentary oversight and accountability. The World e-Parliament Conference was due to take place in Chile, in June 2016, while the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments adopted in 2012 were rapidly gaining global recognition and had now attracted 105 endorsements. A consultation exercise to take stock of progress in and challenges to implementation was to be organized later in 2016.

The IPU youth programme was emerging strong, although the recent IPU publication *Youth participation in national parliaments* pointed to a need for robust action to improve youth involvement in government institutions. Continually active in promoting gender equality, including through its annual publication on women in parliament, the IPU had received additional funding from the Canadian Government for its work in that sphere. The IPU map showing violations of the human rights of parliamentarians also served as a useful advocacy tool in support of protecting those rights. Concerning the SDGs, in addition to organizing specialized meetings on the subject, as reported under item 7 of the agenda, the IPU had developed a toolkit for helping parliaments to assess their preparedness for implementation and would welcome feedback on the samples circulated during the current Assembly.

In conclusion, he drew attention to the report on the PaperSmart Initiative (CL/198/8(a)-R.1), which was designed to green the IPU and lighten its carbon footprint through a reduction in paper consumption, saving natural and financial resources in addition. Members were encouraged to complete the online survey on the subject so that web needs could be evaluated with a view to improving the functioning of Assemblies, including through the development of a dedicated application.

The President observed that the paper consumption at IPU Assemblies was expected to fall by up to one quarter as a result of the PaperSmart Initiative, a project that chimed well overall with the environment-related agenda. IPU TV was another project similarly aimed at improving efficiency and outputs, he said.

The Governing Council took note of the oral report of the Secretary General.

(b) Strategic Objective 5: Build parliamentary support for international developments goals (CL/198/8(b)-P.1)

The President drew attention to the amended draft Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change set out in document CL/198/8(b)-P.1, saying that it was designed to accompany the Paris Agreement adopted in December 2015 and serve as a policy directive offering a medium- to long-term vision of IPU objectives and priorities in the field of climate change and related areas of sustainable development. The increasing frequency and magnitude of the climate-related events wreaking havoc around the world posed a complex challenge and called for engagement in the type of robust response embodied in the draft Action Plan. Related capacity-building support for parliaments in least developed countries already offered by various organizations, including R20 Regions of Climate Action and the International Institute for Environment and Development, would allow the IPU to take forward the Plan, which set a framework for the delivery of ambitious aims implying the need for high-level commitment to implementation. He said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the draft Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change.

It was so decided.

(c) Way ahead for the revised IPU Strategy 2017-2021
(CL/198/8(c)-P.1)

The Secretary General, introducing the draft IPU Strategy for 2017-2021 set out in document CL/198/8(c)-P.1 for consideration by the Council, recalled the findings produced from the mid-term review of the current Strategy, among them the fact that the core mandate of promoting democracy and strong parliaments was considered so broad and ambitious as to create unrealistic expectations concerning the ability of the IPU to fulfil that mandate. As reflected in the title “Strong democratic parliaments serving the people”, the aim had therefore been to develop a more focused revised Strategy for strengthening democracy as a tool for development and well-being, with key priorities and objectives realistically identified on the basis of available and anticipated resources. Also guided by the new global development agenda, the outcome of the recent World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and the five core values of equality, inclusiveness, respect, integrity and solidarity, the draft Strategy encapsulated the role of the IPU and its membership in driving parliamentary action at the national and international levels for achieving the strategic objectives listed, the number of which had been reduced from nine to seven. Drawing attention to the four enabling actions identified in the draft, he invited Members to consider whether the strategic objectives responded to their aspirations and to provide written feedback by 15 July with a view to finalization of the draft for adoption at the next Assembly.

Mr. del Picchia (France) suggested that it might be useful to specify ways in which parliaments could work towards achievement of the strategic objectives, such as through harnessing the potential benefits of social media and information and communication technologies.

Mr. K. Ornfjäder (Sweden) asked whether the period of the present Strategy had been abbreviated and queried the time frame for the submission of comments, saying that a document of such crucial importance to the future direction of the IPU necessitated in-depth consideration.

The President replied that, spanning as it did a five-year period, the present IPU Strategy rolled out in 2012 in fact ended on 31 December 2016. It was therefore important to allow sufficient time for the Secretariat to act on comments received on the draft with a view to its finalization for further consideration and adoption in October, ready for implementation on 1 January 2017.

The Secretary General further pointed out that the revision of the current Strategy was largely driven by the need to account for new elements, including the SDGs, which would already have been in effect for one year in January 2017 and should therefore be fully reflected in the IPU’s activities without further delay.

The President, in response to a question from **Mr. R. León (Chile)**, said that the engagement of regional parliaments was a matter addressed in strategic objective 6 (Promote inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation). He encouraged careful consideration of the revised draft, now available on the IPU website, and said he took it that Members wished to approve the suggestion to extend the deadline for the submission of written comments on that draft to 15 July 2016.

It was so decided.

Item 10 of the agenda
(continued)

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2015
(CL/198/10-R.1 to R.3)

The President, drawing attention to the table set out in annex II of the report on the financial situation of the IPU as at 31 January 2016 (CL/198/10-R.3), relating to unpaid contributions at 19 March 2016, forewarned that, having accumulated over three years of arrears, two of the parliaments listed, namely those of the Republic of Congo and Honduras, would be liable to suspension from membership of the IPU at the next Assembly if their contributions remained unpaid. He likewise urged the Parliaments of Djibouti, Gambia, Somalia and South Sudan to make prompt payment of their accumulated arrears, amounting to over two years in each case, for which reason they had already been deprived of their voting rights at the present Assembly and had the size of their delegations restricted to not more than two persons.

He applauded a proposal made by the delegate from the United Arab Emirates at the recent meeting of the Executive Committee to the effect that, where feasible, IPU Members should include in their budgets, in addition to their statutory contributions, a line for assistance to the IPU. The IPU would indeed welcome any in-kind or financial contributions made on that basis.

The Secretary General joined in applauding that proposal and provided details of the extrabudgetary contributions already made or formally agreed as a result of the IPU's efforts to mobilize voluntary funding since the previous Assembly, specifically: CAD 2 million over three years from the Canadian Government in support of the IPU's work to promote gender equality; USD 100,000 from the Parliament of Micronesia towards the IPU's efforts to improve migration management and policies; CHF 200,000 from the Parliament of Angola for the promotion of IPU activities in the areas of health and gender equality; CHF 400,000 from the Parliament of Equatorial Guinea for that same purpose; and USD 1.5 million from the National People's Congress of China for capacity-building in developing countries. Heartfelt appreciation and gratitude were due for all such inspiring support, including in addition that provided on an ongoing basis by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, primarily for furtherance of the IPU's work in the field of democracy, as well by the Irish Development Agency, the Worldwide Support for Development (Japan), the World Health Organization, UNAIDS and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. The Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates also merited thanks for its contribution to the development of the IPU website, which would soon be operational as a result in the four languages of Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

The President remarked that the increase in voluntary funding stood as a mark of confidence in the IPU as a fit-for-purpose organization capable of delivering on expectations. In considering that positive development, the Executive Committee had underscored the need to strike a balance between core and external funding, to which end it had approved updated guidelines on voluntary contributions. He said he took it that the Council wished to endorse those guidelines, in accordance with the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

The President added that, while the IPU intended strictly to apply those guidelines, it could not continue to reduce statutory contributions indefinitely. He further added that the Executive Committee had considered a proposal for the establishment of a parliamentary solidarity fund, concerning which he expected to be in a position to report further details at the next Council session. He concluded by paying tribute to the Secretary General and his team for their excellent work in maintaining the IPU's financial health during such challenging times.

Item 12 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(a) Meeting of Women Parliamentarians

(i) Reports of the Meeting
(CL/198/12(a)-R.1 and R.2)

Ms. N. Luo (Zambia), presenting the report of the twenty-third Meeting of Women Parliamentarians (CL/198/12(a)-R.1), pointed to the details of the two debates conducted by the Meeting on the theme of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as to those concerning its contribution to the General Debate in the form of a discussion on rejuvenating democracy through the political empowerment of young women. After noting that the draft resolution of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security now included amendments proposed by the Meeting, she said that participants had approved proposed amendments to the Rules of the Meeting and of its Coordinating Committee. If adopted by the Council, those Rules would take immediate effect and the Meeting would be renamed the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and its Coordinating Committee would likewise be renamed the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians. Both, she said, would continue systematically to contribute to and support the gender-related work of the IPU.

(ii) Approval of amendments to the Rules of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians
(CL/198/12(a)-P.1)

The President, drawing attention to the proposed amendments to the Rules of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians and of its Coordinating Committee, as set out in document CL/198/12(a)-P.1, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt those amendments.

It was so decided.

The President said he also took it that the Council wished to approve the editorial amendment required in the Statutes in order to reflect the renaming of the Meeting of Women Parliamentarians to the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.

It was so decided.

The President declared that the amended text of the Rules of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and of those of its Coordinating Committee would now consequently appear in the new edition of the IPU Statutes and Rules to be published after the current Assembly. He congratulated Ms. Mensah-Williams on her re-election as President of the Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians, which would now be renamed the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

(b) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

(i) Election of one member (female)
(CL/198/12(b)-P.1)

The President, referring to the candidature presented in document CL/198/12(b)-P.1, said he took it that the Council wished to elect Ms. D. Solorzano (Venezuela) as a member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

It was so decided.

(ii) Reports of the Committee
(CL/198/12(b)-R.1 and R.2)

Ms. M. Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, reporting on the activities of the Committee at its recent session in Lusaka, said that the Committee had held hearings with 11 delegations and complainants. Such meetings were of great importance to the Committee's work; they allowed it to enhance its understanding of the cases before it, express its concerns, exchange views and foster constructive dialogue with a view to reaching satisfactory solutions that were in accordance with national and international human rights standards. She therefore thanked all the delegations and complainants for taking the time to meet with the Committee.

More precisely, the Committee had examined 39 cases concerning the situation of 143 members of parliament in 14 countries. Of the cases examined, 34 per cent concerned members of parliament from Africa, with another 29 per cent from Asia, 16 per cent from the Middle East and North Africa, 15 per cent from the Americas and 6 per cent from Europe. Just one case concerned a parliamentarian from the South Pacific region. Thirteen per cent of the cases concerned women members of parliament and 70 per cent concerned opposition members.

Although freedom of expression was a direct or indirect concern in almost all of those cases, in descending order, lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians, abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate, arbitrary detention or arrest, violation of freedom of assembly and association, and torture, ill-treatment and other acts of violence had ranked as the most frequent abuses examined by the Committee during the present session.

A slightly smaller number of draft decisions than was normally the case would be presented, as the Committee had had to shorten its session due to a lack of quorum on the last day of its deliberations and she was therefore unable to present draft decisions concerning some of the cases on the Committee's agenda. Set out in document CL/198/12(b)-R.1, the draft decisions she would present concerned 70 parliamentarians in 7 countries. The Committee had also examined cases of concern in various other countries, including Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Burundi, Cameroon, Colombia, Ecuador, Eritrea, Kenya, Iraq, Israel, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, the Maldives, Myanmar, Niger, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

ASIA

Cambodia

A Committee delegation had just conducted a visit to Cambodia and the Committee therefore wished to thank the Cambodian authorities for its assistance on that occasion. The visit related to the situation of 12 parliamentarians of the opposition, which the Committee had initially decided to treat as confidential in order to give the parties, at their request, the opportunity to find a negotiated solution, following the resumption of political dialogue in the second half of 2014. In the absence of progress in the files, the Committee had subsequently decided to organize a site visit in order to gather additional information and put forward solutions. As the Committee considered its mission to have been a "visit of last resort", it had decided in the absence of any significant progress at the conclusion of the visit to present the cases to the Council by bringing to its attention the delegation's preliminary observations and recommendations, to which the Committee fully subscribed.

The Committee was deeply concerned to find that, in all of the cases referred to it, as well as all of those it had examined in the past in Cambodia, the concerns related to similar and recurring issues, namely: the systematic violation of the right of parliamentarians to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly; serious irregularities in the judicial proceedings initiated against the parliamentarians, the violation of international standards on fair trial guarantees, particularly in relation to respecting the rights to defence and the presumption of innocence, as well as concerns about the lack of independence of the judiciary; and the lack of protection of the fundamental rights of parliamentarians by the Cambodian authorities, including within the parliamentary institution. The long-standing procedure and practice followed by the Cambodian Parliament in the lifting of the parliamentary immunity and the revocation of the parliamentary mandates of opposition members of parliament were clear examples of that lack of protection.

The Committee urged the Cambodian authorities, and all political actors concerned, to find solutions for resolving the cases of the 12 parliamentarians as quickly as possible. It also called on them to take the necessary steps to put an end, once and for all, to those long-standing practices and ensure that they were never repeated. It was convinced that only solutions that were in strict compliance with international human rights standards could resolve those issues in the long term.

The Committee also encouraged the Cambodian Parliament to play a proactive and constructive role in finding solutions and in strengthening the protection of the fundamental rights of those members in the long term.

Moreover, the Committee was also concerned about the deteriorating political situation in Cambodia in recent months and the tensions caused by the run-up to the upcoming elections. In fact, the "culture of dialogue" initiated in 2014 had been suspended, then abruptly cut short in late October 2015.

The Committee therefore called on the Cambodian People's Party and the Cambodian National Rescue Party to resume political dialogue without delay in order to help create a stable political environment that was respectful of everyone's rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly in this pre-election period. It was convinced that renewed dialogue would also help the parties reach a solution to the situation of the 12 parliamentarians.

With regard to the individual cases examined, the Committee would submit its detailed conclusions in its final mission report, to be presented to the Council in October 2016, so as to allow the parties first to submit their observations. The hope was that by October the Committee would also be able to report that the cases had meanwhile been solved thanks to cooperation from the Cambodian authorities.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the case of 12 parliamentarians.

Mr. Yang Sem (Cambodia) expressed the view that the submission of those cases for a decision by the Council at the present time was premature insofar as they were still under investigation. Having observed that the delegation from the Committee had met with numerous authorities and third parties during its recent mission to Cambodia, he pointed out that the parliamentarians involved in the cases in question enjoyed no parliamentary immunity in that they had not yet been sworn into office when charged with the offences in question. Earnest attempts to resolve the situation were currently being made through the culture of dialogue, which he said that the delegation from the Committee had seen as a positive development.

Ms. M. Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Committee had been awaiting further information since its mission to Cambodia and that its practice was to present its recommended decisions on cases at the earliest opportunity following a mission. The Committee would take into consideration the comments from the Cambodian delegation during its deliberations at the next Assembly.

Malaysia

Concerning the two cases in Malaysia to be presented, the first concerned the long-standing case of former leader of the opposition, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, who had been sentenced in February 2015, for a second time, on a charge of sodomy. He had been given a five year-prison term, which he was currently serving.

Mr. Anwar Ibrahim had long suffered from health problems, which required adequate and immediate medical attention. The Committee had been pleased to hear from the leader of the Malaysian delegation that Mr. Anwar Ibrahim had been allowed to receive treatment in Malaysia by doctors of his choice and that there was no impediment to him receiving the medical treatment he required.

Notwithstanding that positive news, the Committee believed that Mr. Anwar Ibrahim should not have been detained in the first place and that his trial had been deeply flawed, as borne out by the many procedural irregularities, serious concerns about the credibility of the evidence, dubious circumstances surrounding the alleged sodomy, and new information recently received.

The Committee therefore called on the authorities to release Mr. Anwar Ibrahim immediately and to allow him to return to parliamentary life. In that regard, the Committee was hopeful that the application for a review of his sentence and the reconsideration of his pardon petition would finally enable him to regain his freedom.

The second case concerned parliamentarians facing investigations or charges under the Sedition Act and the Peaceful Assembly Act that directly affected their rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The Committee now had 19 such cases before it.

The Committee had been pleased to hear from the leader of the Malaysian delegation that the sedition charge against member of parliament Teresa Kok in relation to a satirical video she had made had been dropped. It sincerely hoped that the Attorney General would also drop the charges and investigations against the other members of parliament, who had done nothing more than criticize the Government or the administration of justice.

In 2015, the Malaysian Parliament had amended the Sedition Act. The Committee was still concerned that the amended Sedition Act remained excessively vague and broad, thus leaving the door open to abuse. It hoped that parliament, as had been intimidated by some of the persons interviewed during the Committee delegation's visit to Malaysia in 2015, would initiate a fresh review of the Act with a view to bringing it into line with relevant international human rights standards.

The Committee was concerned about reports of arbitrary arrests, investigations and charges against several opposition members under the Peaceful Assembly Act. It realized, however, that more information was needed to fully understand those reports, which is why the Committee hoped to receive detailed information from the authorities about the legal grounds and facts put forward to justify the legal action taken against each parliamentarian.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim and to the case of 19 parliamentarians.

A delegate from Malaysia stressed that the Malaysian authorities had fully cooperated with the Committee, having provided updated information relevant to 11 of the cases under its consideration. Regrettably, the authorities had not been advised that a further eight cases were under consideration but stood ready to provide relevant information likewise concerning those cases. As to the case of Anwar Ibrahim, the lengthy due process had now ended and the conclusion drawn must be respected. With reference to the Sedition Act, he underlined the freedoms of speech and expression enshrined in the Constitution of Malaysia and the need to take account of the country's social traditions. Malaysia was committed to compliance with the core human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, despite the fact that it had not yet ratified that particular instrument. It also continued to promote international human rights. In the light of those factors, his delegation had no option but to express a reservation to the decision.

Ms. M. Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that due note was taken of those remarks and drew attention to the hope expressed in paragraph 9 of the decision that the Malaysian authorities would soon decide to join the overwhelming majority of nations that had ratified the Covenant.

The Secretary General, responding to a query from **Mr. S. Liengboonlertchai (Thailand)**, said that the Council was following its usual practice of adopting draft decisions immediately after their presentation. Further discussion of any amendments proposed or objections raised to decisions adopted in accordance with that practice was nonetheless possible at the discretion of the President.

The President observed that, in adopting draft decisions, the Council relied on the recommendations formulated by the Committee on the basis of its own in-depth investigation of the cases concerned. Where necessary, however, scope was indeed provided for reviewing the substance of draft decisions recommended for adoption.

Mr. E. Rahmeh (Lebanon) suggested that, in the interest of fairness and justice, delegations should be afforded the opportunity to state their views before any decision on cases concerning their national parliamentarians was adopted.

The President noted that delegations were given ample opportunity to present their views to the Committee itself, which then took those views into consideration in formulating its recommendations as guidance for the Council.

A delegate from Belgium further noted that delegations had the option to express reservations to decisions following their adoption, with **the President** adding that any such reservations were placed on record.

A delegate from Venezuela pointed out that Council members were not privy to views expressed before the Committee and should therefore be able to hear those views aired in the present forum.

The President said that it would be impractical to proceed in that manner insofar as the Committee was allocated the time and resources to consider such views in depth, which the Council was not. He proposed that concerned delegations instead be given the opportunity to make a brief intervention before the adoption of any draft decision.

It was so agreed.

Mongolia

In Mongolia, the Committee had been following the investigation into the assassination of Mr. Zorig Sanjasuuren for almost 18 years, thanks to cooperation from the Mongolian parliament, the State Great Hural.

The Committee had organized a mission to Mongolia in September 2015 and she had had the honour of conducting the visit herself. The Committee had presented its preliminary findings to the Council during the previous Assembly in October 2015 and she was now presenting its mission report (CL/198/12(b)-R.2), which fully confirmed the preliminary findings adopted at that time.

At the time of his assassination, Mr. Zorig had been about to be appointed as Prime Minister. Regarded as one of the founding fathers of democracy in Mongolia, he was highly respected. The general feeling was that the assassination was a political crime and that it had deliberately been covered up. Investigations had been ongoing without interruption since his death. However, the perpetrators and instigators of the assassination had still not been identified and the motives behind the assassination had thus far not been made clear.

The delegation that visited Mongolia found that an investigation was still ongoing. However, total secrecy surrounded the investigators' work and the case remained classified. As far as the Mongolian authorities were concerned, that explained why Mr. Zorig's family, his lawyers, the Mongolian people – and the IPU and the Committee – were unable to obtain specific information on the investigation. The Committee considered that such confidentiality was excessive, so long after the event and in view of the negative impact that it had had on the success of the investigation. Indeed, the Committee had found that the lack of transparency had undermined any faith in the investigative process.

Consequently, the Committee urged the Mongolian authorities to ensure more transparency and diligence in the investigation. It called on them to declassify the case without delay and to provide better communication of any progress in the investigation or difficulties encountered. It called on them to do everything in their power to finally shed light on the case.

Moreover, the Committee had been shocked to hear recently that Mr. Zorig's widow had been illegally detained for five months and that she had been subjected to torture by intelligence service agents. According to information received, no charges had been brought against her and her detention had never been reviewed or authorized by a judge. Mr. Zorig's widow had reportedly been put under intense psychological pressure, was being held in solitary confinement in an artificially lit cell 24 hours a day and deprived of access to medical care. The Committee was extremely concerned about that situation and recalled that it was not the first time in the long investigative process that such an incident had occurred. Therefore, in the draft decision now presented, it was requesting the immediate release of the Mr. Zorig's widow and urged the authorities to comply strictly with the legal framework provided by the Constitution and Mongolian legislation in the ongoing investigation.

Lastly, the Committee hoped to receive information soon from the Mongolian authorities on those worrying developments, as well as their observations on the mission report, in line with the commitment made by the authorities during the mission to keep the Committee regularly informed in the future.

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

Thailand

In Thailand, the Committee had for several years been examining the case of Mr. Jatuporn Prompan, one of the main leaders of the Red Shirts who had taken to the streets in early 2010 to oppose the Government of the time. In the weeks following the demonstrations, Mr. Jatuporn and others had been officially charged with participating in an illegal gathering that contravened the state of emergency, and with terrorism in relation to arson attacks made on several buildings on 19 May 2010. At that time, Mr. Jatuporn had already been taken into police custody but he had been subsequently released.

Much had happened in recent years in Thailand. The military had taken over in May 2014 and a National Legislative Assembly had been appointed soon after as part of a roadmap to bring democracy back to Thailand.

The Committee had had an interesting exchange of views in Lusaka with the Deputy Speaker of the National Legislative Assembly on the current political situation, including the opportunity offered to citizens to contribute freely to the political process, and of course the case of Mr. Jatuporn.

The Committee was concerned that Mr. Jatuporn's trial had still not reached a conclusion, almost six years after he had been charged, and that a ruling was not expected before July 2017. It urged the authorities to do everything possible to speed up the proceedings.

Although the Committee took note of the authorities' assurances that Mr. Jatuporn was fully able to contribute to the political process, it was concerned over the serious reports about restrictions to freedom of expression and assembly, which made it difficult to understand how he and his supporters could make a meaningful contribution in reality. The Committee was keen to receive further information from the authorities on that point.

Against that background, the Committee was also concerned about Mr. Jatuporn's brief arrest in November 2015 when he had been about to visit a park in the seaside town of Hua Tin to denounce the misappropriation of funds for the park. Here, too, the Committee was keen to receive official information in order to gain a better understanding of the facts and legal grounds for the arrest.

Mr. S. Liengboonlertchai (Thailand) proposed deletion of the entire reference in paragraph 5 of the draft decision to the recommendation made by the United Nations Special Rapporteur concerning defamation on the ground that the matter was irrelevant and outside the purview of the Committee, further pointing out that protection of citizens was often the rationale for the existence of offences such as defamation under criminal law.

He additionally proposed deletion of the phrase "also presented by some as "attitude adjustment"" from the penultimate paragraph of the draft decision on the ground that NCPO Order 3/2015 had been instituted for no other reason than as a preventive security measure following difficulties experienced in 2014.

Underscoring his delegation's ongoing wish to cooperate with the Committee and agreeing with the principle cited in the draft decision that justice delayed was justice denied, he said that Mr. Jatuporn was undergoing a fair trial but that proceedings had been delayed owing to his request to call over 100 witnesses, which was a time-consuming exercise.

Ms. M. Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, agreeing that justice delayed was indeed justice denied, said that she was amenable to the second proposal to delete the phrase containing the reference to "attitude adjustment" in the interest of avoiding any criticism implied by that phrase. Concerning the first proposal, however, her view was that the reference to the recommendation of the United Nations Special Rapporteur should remain, in conformity with the Committee's standard practice of taking up the recommendations of relevant United Nations treaty bodies and notably so in the case concerned, given that Thailand was a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision, as orally amended, relating to the case of Mr. Jatuporn Prompan.

Fiji

The Committee was presenting to the Council for the first time the case of Fijian opposition member, Mr. Lalabalavu. It first wished to express, however, its solidarity with the Fijian people and authorities in the aftermath of the destruction caused by Cyclone Winston.

In May 2015, Mr. Lalabalavu's party, SODELPA, had held a local constituency meeting. At that meeting, Mr. Lalabalavu had made unacceptable remarks about Madam Speaker, which were both offensive and degrading.

The matter had been subsequently taken up in parliament, which had decided to suspend him for two years. The Committee considered that suspension to be both inappropriate and totally disproportionate. The Committee underscored that the remarks had been made outside of parliament at a local party meeting, that a clear legal basis for the two-year suspension was absent and that the suspension effectively meant that Mr. Lalabalavu and his electorate had no voice in parliament for an extended period of time. The Committee also believed that alternative, regular avenues could have been used instead to obtain redress for the slanderous words.

It therefore hoped that Mr. Lalabalavu's suspension would soon be lifted, either through a new decision by parliament or as a result of the outcome of the constitutional challenge that he had brought to court.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Ratu Naiqama Lalabalavu.

AFRICA

Democratic Republic of the Congo

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Committee had continued to examine the situation of current and former members of parliament, which had first been brought to its attention in 2012. It noted with regret that no progress had been made in resolving these cases.

The Committee had also examined a new case concerning an opposition member of parliament beaten and briefly detained in violation of his parliamentary immunity.

The new case brought to 34 the number of members of parliament subjected to serious violations of their fundamental rights in that country. The DRC currently had the highest number of cases before the Committee, which was deeply worrying. The Committee was particularly concerned about that situation, given that it was occurring against a background of a deteriorating political situation in the run-up to the elections to be held at the end of the year.

The Committee also noted with concern that most of those cases raised the same concerns, which related in particular to violations of the freedom of expression of the parliamentarians concerned, to trials marked by serious irregularities and the lack of remedies for parliamentarians convicted in politically sensitive cases. They also related to the growing number of cases of the violation of the parliamentary immunity of members of parliament who had criticized the presidential majority's policy.

The Committee deplored that the recommendations already made by the Governing Council had not been implemented by the Congolese authorities. Those recommendations aimed to end violations of the rights of those members of parliament and former members of parliament. They also aimed to ensure that such incidents did not recur in the future, which meant in particular that appropriate reform measures should be taken.

The Committee therefore again urged the DRC authorities to take urgent measures to find satisfactory solutions in the cases examined. It expressed the hope that a Committee follow-up visit to Kinshasa might help speed up that process and requested the Secretary General to contact the authorities to that end.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the case of 34 parliamentarians.

The Committee was also dealing with several old cases in Zambia. The concerns in those cases mainly related to the law on public order and how it had been used during the elections in recent years. The next elections would be held in August 2016 and the Committee was confident that the executive and parliament, with help from all stakeholders, would be able to amend the law in time to ensure that the right of everyone to peaceful assembly was fully respected.

AMERICAS

Guatemala

The Committee was bringing to the attention of the Council for the first time the case of the Guatemalan parliamentarian, Amilcar de Jesús Pop, a member of Guatemala's Congress since 2011. Mr. Pop had been the subject of repeated death threats and harassment in reprisal for his work as an opposition member of parliament, during which he had drawn attention to several cases of violations of the rights of the Mayan indigenous peoples by state officials or private companies. He had also been behind the investigations initiated against many public officials accused of corruption, money laundering and illegal enrichment, including the former President and Vice-President of Guatemala.

The Committee was deeply concerned at the death threats and harassment against Mr. Pop, and by the fact that the complaints lodged with the national authorities had reportedly still not been examined. The Committee considered that those allegations should be taken seriously and urged the authorities to do their utmost to identify the culprits and bring them to justice. In that light, the Committee specifically requested the Guatemalan Parliament to use its powers to the maximum to ensure that an effective investigation was conducted and that adequate protection was provided to Mr. Pop.

The Governing Council adopted by consensus the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Amilcar de Jesús Pop.

Parliaments and human rights were inextricably linked. When the rights of parliamentarians were violated, it was not only parliamentarians who were threatened, but the parliamentary institution as a whole. Similarly, when the rights of a parliamentarian were violated in a country, the rights of parliamentarians around the world were weakened. That was why parliamentary solidarity was so important and underpinned the Committee's work.

When parliamentarians were threatened, the active solidarity of colleagues not only had a very positive impact on individual cases, but also consolidated the institution of parliament itself. That solidarity was indispensable for the Committee's work and could make all the difference in progressing towards resolution of the serious cases before it, further promoting and protecting human rights and thus further empowering parliaments around the world. She therefore encouraged Members to keep parliamentary solidarity in mind, and to use their powers as members of parliament to help their fellow colleagues in difficult situations.

The President echoed those general remarks and commended the Committee on its balanced and inclusive work to defend the rights of parliamentarians, themselves defenders of human rights. The IPU would continue fully to support that work in solidarity with all concerned, he said.

(c) Committee on Middle East Questions

**(i) Election of one titular and one substitute member
(CL/198/12(c)-P.1 and P.2)**

The President, referring to the candidatures presented in documents CL/198/12(c)-P.1 and P.2, said he took it that the Council wished to elect Ms. C. Guittet (France) as a titular member of the Committee on Middle East Questions and Mr. M.A. Al Muhrizi (United Arab Emirates) as a substitute member.

It was so decided.

(ii) Report of the Committee
(CL/19812(c)-R.1)

Ms. D. Pascal Allende (Chile), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, delivered the Committee's report of its recent meeting, as contained in document CL/198/12(c)-R.1.

(d) Group of Facilitators for Cyprus

(i) Election of one Facilitator
(CL/198/12(d)-P.1)

The President, referring to the candidature presented in document CL/198/12(d)-P.1, said he took it that the Council wished to elect Mr. J. de Matos Rosa (Portugal) as a member of the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus.

It was so decided.

(ii) Report of the Group of Facilitators
(CL/19812(d)-R.1)

Mr. P. Van Den Driessche (Belgium), member of the Group of Facilitators for Cyprus, presented the Group's report (CL/19812(d)-R.1), saying that, as a result of positive developments in the long-standing dispute over Cyprus, the hope of a solution had finally emerged, in which event there would be no further need for a Group of Facilitators.

(e) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

(i) Election of three members
(CL/198/12(e)-P.1 and P.2)

The Secretary General drew attention to the candidatures presented in documents CL/198/12(e)-P.1 and P.2, namely those of Ms. M. Haj Hassan Osman (Sudan) as a female member of the Committee for the Arab Group and Mr. A.C. Duval (Mauritius) as a male member for the African Group. He said that no candidature had yet been received for the vacancy of male member for the Eurasia Group.

A delegate from Kenya, supported by **Ms. B. Amongi (Uganda)**, called for a deferral of the election of the member for the African Group until the next Assembly pending conclusive deliberations within the Group concerning the selection of its candidate, about which she had reservations on the ground that due process had not been followed.

The Secretary General, noting that election decisions could be taken only on the basis of candidatures received within the deadline, said it was his understanding that the one candidature submitted for the African Group had been agreed by consensus of the Group.

The President concurred with that interpretation and observed that issues arising within geopolitical groups must be resolved internally. On that basis, he said he took it that the Council wished to elect the two candidates presented, while also taking note of the reservations expressed by the delegates from Kenya and Uganda.

It was so decided.

(ii) Report of the Committee
CL/198/12(e)-R.1)

Mr. S. Owais (Jordan), President of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, summarized the content of the Committee's report (CL/198/12(e)-R.1) and called on parliamentarians to implement the actions recommended by the Committee following its discussions on the plight of Syrian and other refugees, as well as on statelessness. For its part, the Committee would report back on the mission it had agreed to undertake to Greece and/or Lebanon. He further outlined the details concerning Committee's discussion of the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and of the forthcoming World Humanitarian Summit, to be held in May 2016 in Istanbul, which he suggested that the IPU might wish to attend and report on the outcomes at the next Assembly.

(f) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/198/12(f)-R.1)

Ms. G. Eldegard (Norway), Chairperson of the Gender Partnership Group, presenting the report of the Group's activities (CL/198/12(f)-R.1), said that, having analysed the gender composition of the Executive Committee, the Group had agreed to develop a concrete proposal for increasing the female membership quota from 20 to 30 per cent and to explore measures for improving the representation of women across the geopolitical groups. It had further agreed to identify ways of augmenting the proportion of women delegates participating in Assemblies, which, as borne out by the statistics detailed in the report, was continuing to stagnate. The unacceptably high number of all-male delegations at the 134th Assembly raised another issue for attention. She highlighted the dialogue held with the delegation from Micronesia concerning women's political participation in that country, saying that the Group had been encouraged by the delegation's expression of commitment to change, which the IPU was ready to support through outreach and awareness activities. For its part, the Group was committed to the advancement of gender equality and counted on the contribution of Members to that objective.

(g) Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
(CL/198/12(g)-R.1)

Ms. P. Locatelli (Italy), member of the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, delivered the report of the Advisory Group, as contained in document CL/198/12(g)-R.1.

(h) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/198/12(h)-R.1 and R.2)

Ms. M. Dziva (Zimbabwe), Rapporteur of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU and member of the Board of the Forum, outlined the details of the deliberations described in the Forum's report (CL/198/12(h)-R.1) and emphasized that greater action was needed to ensure that youth benefited from government policies. She commended the IPU's efforts to empower young parliamentarians. Youth, she said, were ready, responsible and capable of participation.

Mr. G. Monde (Zambia) delivered the report on the recent Third IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians in Lusaka, as contained in document CL/198/12(h)-R.2, drawing attention in addition to the outcome document adopted by the young parliamentarians participating in the Conference, which was appended to the report.

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

TRIBUTE TO RETIRING IPU STAFF MEMBER MR. SERGUEI TCHELNOKOV

The Secretary General, echoed by **the President**, paid tribute on behalf of all IPU colleagues and Members to IPU staff member Mr. Serguei Tchelnokov, Programme Manager, who would be retiring from active service in June 2016 after devoting many years of his life to work at the IPU in a variety of capacities. He wished Mr. Tchelnokov well in his future endeavours, which would in fact include assisting in a project to reorganize the IPU's archives in digital form.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.

Third sitting

Wednesday, 23 March 2016

The meeting was called to order at 2.40 p.m., with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Mr. Saber Chowdhury (Bangladesh), in the Chair.

Item 9 of the agenda

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

(CL/198/9-R.1)

The Secretary General drew attention to the checklist of activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations system, as set out in document CL/198/9-R.1, highlighting the high level of engagement in general and the strong relationship with the Secretary-General of the United Nations himself, who continued to demonstrate both keen interest in stepping up cooperation with the IPU and support for parliaments around the globe. In that context, the IPU Secretary General outlined the progress achieved towards conclusion of the IPU's new cooperation agreement with the United Nations, saying that the revised draft developed in consultation with the United Nations Department of Legal Affairs was now under discussion with a view to finalizing the text for signature.

The President, outlining the main advantages of the new draft agreement compared with the version concluded in 1996, said that it recognized the strategic partnership between the United Nations and the IPU, identified the IPU as the global parliamentary counterpart to the United Nations, and would stand as a framework agreement for access to specialized agencies with which the IPU could conclude specific agreements, including for funding. He stressed that, in negotiating the final draft, the IPU would remain mindful of the need to avoid any potential long-term financial exposure. A further progress report would be provided at the next Assembly, the hope being that the agreement could be concluded before the end of the year, which was indeed the aim of both parties.

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 stated that the item had been covered under item 8 of the agenda on implementation of the IPU Strategy 2012-2017.

Item 13 of the agenda

135th IPU ASSEMBLY (GENEVA, 23-27 OCTOBER 2016)

The President confirmed that the 135th IPU Assembly would take place in Geneva from 23 to 27 October 2016 and that the Executive Committee would meet on 21, 22 and 26 October and the Governing Council on 24 and 27 October.

Item 14 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS
(CL/198/14-P.1)

(a) Statutory meetings

The Secretary General, drawing attention to the details pertaining to future assemblies set out in document CL/198/14-P.1, said with reference to the invitation from the Parliament of Bangladesh to host the 136th IPU Assembly in Dhaka that the IPU mission dispatched to assess the available facilities had found them to be fit for the intended purpose and had also confirmed the commitment of the Bangladeshi authorities to the success of the event, including through fulfilment of the necessary visa requirements for all delegates. The Executive Committee had therefore recommended that the 136th Assembly and related meetings should be held in Dhaka from 1 to 5 April 2017.

It was so decided.

A short promotional video on Bangladesh was screened.

The President said that the Bangladeshi Parliament and Government were humbled by the decision to select Dhaka as the venue for the 136th Assembly and related meetings.

The Secretary General, looking forward to the 137th IPU Assembly in the final quarter of 2017, said that a formal offer had been received from the Parliament of the Russian Federation to host that event in Saint Petersburg, adding that the Russian authorities had provided assurances of their commitment to grant entry visas to all delegates and to cover all extra costs involved in relocating the venue for that Assembly from Geneva. The Executive Committee had therefore recommended that a mission be dispatched to assess the facilities available in Saint Petersburg and that, in order to facilitate the necessary planning, the Council approve acceptance of the invitation in principle, pending a formal decision at the 135th Assembly in October on the basis of whether the mission's findings were positive.

The President said that the holding of two successive assemblies outside Geneva was a feasible option and that, subject to approval of the recommendation of the Executive Committee, the intention was to dispatch a mission to Saint Petersburg in May in order to evaluate the suitability of the venue.

Ms. A. King (New Zealand) stated that reservations concerning that recommendation had been expressed within the Twelve Plus Group on account of the imprisonment of a Ukrainian member of parliament by the Russian authorities and that those reservations should be taken into account in the light of the IPU commitment to democracy and human rights. It was her understanding, however, that the Council was nevertheless being requested to take an immediate in-principle decision concerning the hosting of the Assembly.

The President observed that the matter had been discussed at length within the Executive Committee and that no such reservations had been expressed by the members for the Twelve Plus Group.

Ms. A. King (New Zealand) noted that the meeting of the Executive Committee at which the matter was discussed had taken place before the meeting of the Twelve Plus Group at which those reservations had been expressed. Nonetheless, the Group had received assurances that the Executive Committee had taken no decisive view on the matter.

The President said that geopolitical groups must resolve their own issues internally and that the recommendation before the Council was the outcome of discussions on a matter placed on the agenda of the Executive Committee.

Mr. P. Mahoux (Belgium), speaking in his capacity as President of the Twelve Plus Group, clarified the reservations expressed by members of the Group, saying that they were essentially based on concerns relating to respect for human rights in general and for the human rights of parliamentarians in the Russian Federation in particular. Joined by **Mr. R. del Picchia (France)** speaking in his capacity as a member of the Executive Committee, he underlined that formal approval of the recommendation of the Executive Committee would depend on the findings of the mission to Saint Petersburg.

Ms. M. Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), speaking in her capacity as Vice-President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, recalled that many IPU Assemblies had been held in countries under scrutiny by her Committee for violations of the human rights of parliamentarians, which included the present host. In the Committee's view, such situations should not impede the hosting of Assemblies, which should instead be regarded as an opportunity to effect constructive solutions to cases under its consideration, such as through changes to legislation. Concerning the Ukrainian member of parliament imprisoned in the Russian Federation, she explained that the Committee had decided not to pursue her case on the ground that the acts for which she was convicted had pre-dated her election to parliament. In communicating that decision to the concerned Ukrainian parties, it had invited them to return the case to the Committee's attention in the event of evidence that her human rights had been violated following her assumption of office. It had as yet heard nothing further.

Mr. K. Ornfjäder (Sweden), supported by **delegates from Germany, Iceland and Kenya**, expressed the view that relevant human rights issues should be discussed further and taken into account in the final decision to be taken at the October Assembly following the outcome of the mission to Saint Petersburg.

A delegate from Chile suggested that the likes of the present debate could be avoided in future if the Executive Committee, before making recommendations concerning Assembly venues, were to ascertain from the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians whether any cases associated with a potential venue were serious enough to rule out the acceptance of an invitation to host an Assembly in that venue.

The Secretary General, responding to comments, emphasized that the Executive Committee was not a decision-making body; it was tasked solely with conducting preliminary groundwork on the basis of which to make recommendations for decision by the Council. Nor could any IPU assessment mission ever be mandated to consider a potential venue from anything other than the purely practical and logistical aspects. Moreover, the provisional approval of the proposed venue at the present time for the sake of planning timelines was no guarantee of a formal decision in favour of that venue.

The President pointed out in addition the waste of resources that would be involved in dispatching an assessment mission to Saint Petersburg if the objections expressed concerning the host country were absolute, in which case a decision to accept the invitation or not should be taken at the present juncture. He repeated that the rationale behind the Committee's recommendation was for the practical purpose of affording to the potential host the time required to mobilize the additional funding entailed in the change of location of the Assembly from Geneva. In the event of a formal decision in favour of the venue, any issues of concern could, as mentioned earlier, be addressed by taking advantage of the opportunity thus provided to engage proactively with the host authorities.

Ms. B. Mbete (South Africa), supported by **delegates from Bahrain, the United Republic of Tanzania and Cuba**, declared herself in favour of the venue and endorsed the suggestion to take an immediate decision on the matter.

Mr. X. Wang (China), expressed support for the procedure recommended by the Executive Committee.

The President said that, in the absence of a consensus, the Council must proceed to vote by show of hands whether to take a formal decision concerning the venue at the present time or in October.

Ms. A. King (New Zealand) explained that her earlier remarks had been made on the basis of a possible misunderstanding on her part that the Council was being requested to take an in-principle decision concerning the venue before any mission was dispatched. It had not been her intention to prejudge the formal decision to be taken in October.

The Secretary General, on the basis of a request from the United Kingdom delegation for a vote by show of hands on the matter, gave details of the voting procedure.

The President announced that the United Kingdom request had been withdrawn and said he therefore took it that the Council wished to endorse the recommendation of the Executive Committee that it should approve the proposed IPU mission to Saint Petersburg and subsequently, in the light of the mission's findings, take a formal decision concerning the venue at its next session in October.

It was so decided.

The President confirmed that the findings of the IPU mission to Saint Petersburg would be reported to the Council at the next Assembly.

(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/198/14-P.1, some of which had already been approved by the Council. The remaining meetings for which Council approval was now sought were funded from external sources and thus had no implications for the IPU's core budget. The planned parliamentary meeting at the 21st International AIDS Conference should preferably be removed from the list, however, by reason of the prior commitments of the potential host. He highlighted in addition the proposed parliamentary event at the World Health Assembly as a new initiative to be co-sponsored by the Parliaments of Bangladesh, Italy and Lesotho.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to approve the list of specialized and other meetings.

It was so decided.

Item 15 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(CL/198/15-P.1 and P.2)

The President, referring to the candidatures presented in documents CL/198/15-P.1 and P.2, said he took it that the Council wished to elect Mr. A.J. Ahmed (United Arab Emirates) and Ms. F. Benbadis (Algeria) as members of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

The President announced that, on the previous day, the Executive Committee had appointed six IPU Vice-Presidents, namely: Mr. D.E. Ethuro (Kenya) for the African Group; Mr. A. Jasem Ahmed (United Arab Emirates) for the Arab Group; Mr. S. Suzuki (Japan) for the Asia-Pacific Group; Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation) for the Eurasia Group; Mr. A. Lins (Brazil) for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean; and Mr. I. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom) for the Twelve Plus Group. He added that the absence of women vice-presidents was regrettable.

Ms. G. Eldegard (Norway), speaking in her capacity as Chairperson of the Gender Partnership Group, echoed that sentiment of regret and said that the Group was developing a proposal for increasing the quota for women on the Executive Committee to 30 per cent.

The President said that the Executive Committee was indeed sensitized to the issue but that the present composition of the geopolitical groups had offered little room for flexibility. Given the one-year term of vice-presidency, however, the hope was that women would have the opportunity for membership at the time of the next election.

On that note, he declared closed the 198th session of the Governing Council.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.