Governing Council
Item 5

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Interim report by the Secretary General on the activities of the IPU since the 198th session of the Governing Council

(b)   International Day of Democracy 2016

In November 2007, the United Nations General Assembly designated 15 September as the International Day of Democracy. The ninth celebration of this Day was observed in 2016 by a large number of parliaments, governments, civil society organizations, international organizations and the IPU.

Democracy 2030 was the theme chosen by the IPU for the 2016 edition of the International Day of Democracy. As at 23 September 2016, a total of 17 parliaments[1] reported having taken some action to celebrate the International Day of Democracy. A summary of parliamentary activities is annexed to this report.

The theme of *Democracy 2030* was widely used and parliaments benefited from the theme's significant flexibility. Descriptions of parliamentary events and all the materials produced by the IPU for the Day are available at www.ipu.org/idd. The United Nations followed the IPU's lead and adopted *Democracy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* as its theme for the International Day.

Key messages on *Democracy 2030* were developed in the IPU press release for the Day, which was widely shared on social media. The theme questioned the ways in which parliaments will function in the future, how they will engage and involve youth, and the importance of democracy for the 2030 Agenda.

The discussion on the future of democracy was highly relevant at a time when new technologies are enhancing the ability of parliaments to engage more directly with citizens. Furthermore, it alluded to the ways in which parliaments can engage youth in their own spaces, while at the same time creating more space for youth in parliaments. Lastly, *Democracy 2030* also exposed the fundamental importance of more democracy to underpin the 2030 Agenda, which acknowledges that strong, transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions are necessary across the board with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To contribute to the debate, the IPU commissioned three leading thinkers to write reflection pieces on the future of democracy. Mr. David Beetham described possible scenarios in the years after 2030, from where he looks back at the catastrophic crises of the 2020s and how citizens came together to reclaim their democratic right. Meanwhile, Ms. Laura Anthony and Ms. Jane Hilderman pointed to the need to set an agenda for making democracies more reflective and sophisticated in how they measure and track their performance. Lastly, Mr. Cristiano Ferri analysed the role of new digital tools in parliaments and predicted that the arrival of the citizen-legislator was imminent. These pieces can be found at http://www.ipu.org/dem-e/idd/2016-democracy-2030.htm.

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[1]   Andorra, Bahrain, Benin, Fiji, India, Israel, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Myanmar, Namibia, Peru, Romania, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay and Zambia, plus the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and the European Parliament.

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Additionally, the IPU organized on 21 September a debate entitled: *Democracy 2030: Imagining the elections and parliaments of the future* in partnership with the Graduate Institute in Geneva. The debate was part of the programme of activities for the Democracy Week organized by the State Chancellery of Geneva. About 150 persons attended, including students and members of the public. The three panellists, Icelandic MP Birgitta Jónsdóttir, Tunisian MP Myriam Boujbel and Dutch Senator Nico Schrijver, gave their assessment of the state of democracy in their respective countries, discussing a wide range of issues, including the challenges faced by traditional political parties, the (often difficult) pathways to greater youth representation and the opportunities and risks that new forms of democracy facilitated by online interaction can pose.

The panellists emphasized that building democracy is a long and continuous process. Ms. Boujbel highlighted the important effort underway in Tunisia to build strong institutions in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. She described how the main state institutions – the presidency, the executive and the parliament – are still testing where the boundaries of their respective powers lie. She added that the priority is to develop the concept of citizenship and to centre efforts on citizen education.
Ms. Jónsdóttir alluded to her efforts to open the windows of parliament in Iceland and called for new, citizen-driven forms of politics. She felt that more discussions are needed about global warming in parliament, which she considered as the biggest threat the world is facing. Mr. Schrijver provided colourful examples from Dutch history to highlight that democracy is an ongoing process. He considered that the populist movements that have emerged in defiance of traditional parties will not be sustainable over time and emphasized the pre-eminence of political ideas over personalities. He also pointed to the difficulties that parliaments face in overseeing the executive, which he considered is one of the essential features of legislative power.

In parallel with these activities, the IPU participated actively in the promotion of the International Day on social media, using Twitter and Facebook to convey messages related to democracy and the Day's theme. The #DemocracyDay hashtag was widely used on Twitter. On 15 September, IPU tweets generated 14,262 organic impressions and 23,400 over the course of the full week.

Country	
Andorra	For International Day of Democracy 2016, the Parliament of Andorra decided to focus on reduced election turnout, which is a new development in the country. The Parliament held a press conference on this issue on 15 September, at which two studies were presented. The same subject was the focus of a conference held at the Parliament building on 20 September, which was open to the public with opportunities for questions and discussion.
Bahrain	Bahrain celebrated Democracy Day 2016 with the theme *Democracy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. In a statement, Information Affairs Minister Ali bin Mohammed Al-Romaihi hailed Bahrain's democratic strides since His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa launched a reform process.
Benin	As a prelude to its Democracy Day celebrations, the Parliament of Benin organized a visit to the PLM Alédjo de Cotonou Hotel on 14 September. This hotel is the venue of the historic Conference of Active Forces of the Nation which, in February 1990, marked the start of the country's democratic era. On 15 September, two activities were held. A conference and debate on law, justice and peace, and another event on attracting young people into parliaments. Additionally, there was a televised debate on the theme of *Benin, Democracy 2030: Youth Engagement*.
Fiji	In Fiji, Speaker of Parliament Dr. Jiko Luveni gave a keynote address at a Youth Forum at the Labasa Civic Centre on 14 September to mark International Day of Democracy. The theme was *Democracy 2030 - My Parliament, My Future*. Youth speakers discussed their views on Parliament, its relevance and how it would impact their future as young people and future leaders.
India	The Parliament of India commemorated International Day of Democracy on 15 September. The country's Lok Sabha Television (LSTV) marked the day by broadcasting a programme on the theme *Democracy 2030*. The programme was then repeated in different time slots during the following six days.
Israel	In Israel, parliamentarians celebrated Democracy Day by recording video messages in different languages about what democracy means to them, linked to IPU's theme of *Democracy 2030*. MK Nachman Shai (Zionist Union) spoke in English, MK Sharren Haskel (Likud) in French, MK Haim Jelin (Yesh Atid) in Spanish, MK Ksenia Svetlova (Zionist Union) in Arabic, and Knesset Education, Culture and Sport Committee chairman Ya'acov Margi (Shas) in Hebrew. For more details and to watch the videos, see the Jerusalem Post's report here.
Luxembourg	Luxembourg's Chamber of Deputies held an open day on 24 September. The event featured guided tours and meetings with parliamentarians, where citizens were able to learn more about parliament's work. In September, the Chamber also launched an Instagram account to further share information about its work with the public, in particular with young people.
Montenegro	The Parliament of Montenegro marked Democracy Day with two events. On 13 September, the parliament organized a ceremony at which certificates were awarded to participants of its democracy education programme. The Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Darko Pajović, handed out the certificates to the representatives of almost 2,600 participants, who attended workshops on *Democracy and Parliament*, *European Union* and *Human Rights* earlier this year. The ceremony gathered representatives of more than 40 elementary schools, students and teachers, MPs, ambassadors and NGOs. On 15 September, a workshop on *Democracy and Parliament* was held, at which primary school students and teachers discussed democracy in 2030, including the future of elections.

Country	
Myanmar	Myanmar celebrated International Day of Democracy with an event in Nay Pyi Taw on 15 September, at which a statement from the IPU Secretary General was read out. President U Htin Kyaw reportedly highlighted the importance of recognizing the voices and rights of minorities, in a formal address read out on his behalf at the ceremony. In a speech marking the Day, the Speaker of the Lower House, Win Myint, reportedly contrasted dictatorships with democratic systems, imploring Myanmar's people to protect the country's nascent democracy.
Namibia	The Parliament of Namibia commemorated International Day of Democracy during the morning of 15 September 2016 in the National Assembly Chamber, under the theme *Democracy 2030*. Discussions focused on how democracy may change between now and 2030; how the parliament can ensure young people's political participation and prepare for democracy's future; and how to connect the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the democratic values of participation, inclusiveness and accountability.
	Prof. Peter H. Katjavivi, the Speaker of the National Assembly, officially opened the event. Representatives from government, civil society and youth gave presentations and debated in parliamentary style. Some 90 students from universities and high schools, and representatives from the National Youth Council took part. Members of the public were invited to attend the event, which was also televised live on NBC TV. The electorate, in particular young people, were encouraged to tune into the televised broadcast channel and to follow the event on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/Parliament-of-the-Republic-of-Namibia-134417479967290/, and on Twitter under the hashtag #democracydaynam2016.
Peru	In Peru, a week of activities marked International Day of Democracy, with the main event taking place on 15 September. The country's Democracy Week – sponsored by the First Vice-President, in cooperation with the Office of Participation, Outreach and Citizen Liaison – began on 12 September. Activities included a University/School Parliament on 12 and 13 September, with secondary and university-level students attending workshops and learning about the roles of Congress and parliamentary work, and what it is like to take part in parliamentary groups, committees, debates and votes on bills.
	In the afternoon of 14 September, a *Democracy in Peru* forum at the Raúl Porras Barrenechea Conference Hall highlighted how public and private institutions promote democracy in the country, with the participation of the United Nations in Peru, the Institute of Peruvian Studies and International IDEA. On the main day, 15 September, a *Democracy for all* event in the Plaza Bolivar close to the Legislative Palace brought together representatives of public and private institutions, parliamentary groups and civil society organizations, to share information about democracy. The central theme was *Democracy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. For more details, click here.
Romania	As proposed by the President of the Romanian IPU Group, the 2016 edition of the International Day of Democracy was marked in the Parliament by statements in the plenum of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The statements were delivered by the President of the Romanian IPU Group, Mr. Ion Stan and by a member of the Executive Bureau of the Romanian IPU Group, Mr. Dumitru Oprea.
	A special section was created on the Senate's website at: http://www.senat.ro/ORGANIZATII/426da62e-e87b-4aeb-ba6f-029b6f607426/ZID%202016%20webpage.htm.
Uganda	The Parliament of Uganda marked International Day of Democracy with the theme *Democracy and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.* As well as celebrating democracy, the Day was used as a time to reflect on the state of democracy in the country and how it can impact on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A radio talk show was broadcast on 13 September, while on 15 September, Parliament held a panel discussion with MPs, academia, development partners and civil society.

Country	
Ukraine	On International Day of Democracy, MPs, representatives of the parliamentary secretariat and NGOs gathered in Ukraine to discuss open parliament principles. The event aimed to establish more effective cooperation between the MPs, the Secretariat of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, and the public to implement the principles of the Declaration on Parliamentary Openness, which Ukraine formally endorsed on 5 February 2016. The main focus of the event was open committees and an explanation of monitoring mechanisms and public engagement. The event was organized in the framework of the Rada for Europe Project, implemented by UNDP Ukraine and funded by the European Union.
United Kingdom	On 15 September, British Group of IPU (http://www.bgipu.org/) Executive Committee member Lord Purvis of Tweed led a roundtable discussion among experts from a range of development bodies and civil society organizations on *Parliamentary oversight of the global Goals*. Discussions highlighted the IPU's work on encouraging parliaments across the world to play leading roles in the implementation of the global Goals, including in holding governments to account in meeting their core commitments. Ongoing engagement between parliament, development agencies and civil society was seen as key to this process. The roundtable provided a key opportunity to increase awareness of the role the IPU is playing in promoting the role of parliaments on the 2030 Agenda and to hear the views of development experts on what more the UK Parliament should be doing to ensure effective UK implementation of the global Goals.
Uruguay	To commemorate International Day of Democracy, the Parliamentary Library and the Uruguayan IPU Group organized an event entitled *Democracy 2030*. High school students, democratically elected as representatives of their class, participated in the event. This responsibility was given to María Victoria Nuñez, Andy Caetano Maya and Melani Rodríguez Vaz from "Vichadero" High School; Ana Paula Borraz, Federico Pereyra and Alfonso García, from "Seminario and Virginia Cibils"; and Francis Martínez and Ailén Pennino from High School No.17 "Francisco Acuña de Figueroa". They gave a five-minute presentation on their reflections on Democracy 2030. Afterwards, Senator Ivonne Passada and MPs Ope Pasquet, Gustavo Penadés, Iván Posada and Eduardo Rubio commented on the presentations. For more information (in Spanish) click here: https://parlamento.gub.uy/noticiasyeventos/noticias/node/86099.
Zambia	The Zambia National Group celebrated International Day of Democracy with activities on *Democracy 2030* at the country's Parliament Buildings on Monday 10 October 2016. Young people debated whether there were sufficient opportunities for youth to contribute effectively to the growth of Zambia's democracy and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Participants were also able to interact with Members and staff of Parliament, and to engage on national and global issues. Secondary schools from each province took part in a debate contest during the day, with participants debating for or against the motion *Are there enough opportunities for youths to contribute effectively to the growth of Zambia's Democracy and the realization of Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030?* There was also an Open Day at Parliament Buildings – to which 10 schools from Lusaka's townships were invited to observe the activities marking Democracy Day. A cultural group provided entertainment.

Associate Member	
East African Legislative Assembly (EALA)	The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) encouraged all parliaments and political parties of the EAC Partner States to celebrate International Day of Democracy on 15 September 2016 by having specific programmes facilitating and promoting young people's participation in society – including in decision-making and politics. On 30 August 2016, EALA debated and passed a motion – moved by Hon. Nusura Tiperu – for the Assembly to celebrate Democracy Day. The Assembly also resolved to mark the Day by setting an agenda for discussion that ensures the political participation of young people as the region embraces the future of democracy. In a subsequent statement, EALA highlighted the IPU's Democracy Day 2016 theme of *Democracy 2030.* Click here for more details.
European Parliament	The European Parliament – in cooperation with the European External Action Service and in partnership with the Office of International IDEA in Brussels, European Endowment for Democracy, European Partnership for Democracy and European Network of Political Foundations – hosted an event marking International Day of Democracy in Brussels on 28 September 2016. The meeting was hosted by the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, and brought together intergovernmental and civil society organizations active in the field of democracy support. It provided an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the key ingredients of democracy today, such as representation, accountability, participation, inclusion and education.