



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

CL/199/SR.1
9 January 2017

Summary records of the Governing Council

199th session

24 and 27 October 2016

Centre international de Conférences de Genève
Geneva

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First sitting

Monday, 24 October 2016

The sitting was called to order at 9.25 a.m., with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), in the Chair.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(CL/199/A.1 and A.2)

Ms. M. Ionova (Ukraine) said that her delegation had requested a separate agenda item on the date and place of the 137th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The President said that the dates and places of future sessions of the Assembly would be addressed under Item 13 of the agenda.

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 198th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

(CL/198/SR.1)

The summary records of the 198th session of the Governing Council, contained in document CL/198/SR.1 were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP AND OBSERVER STATUS

(a) Requests for affiliation and reaffiliation to the IPU

(CL/199/3(a)-P.1)

The President said that a formal request for reaffiliation had been received from the Parliament of Swaziland, set out in document CL/199/3(a)-P.1. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve that request and admit Swaziland as the 171st member Parliament of the IPU.

Mr. M. Khumalo (Swaziland) thanked the Governing Council for approving Swaziland's request for reaffiliation to the IPU and thanked the Secretary General for his support in the preparations for rejoining the membership. While he regretted Swaziland's long absence from the Organization, he expressed his Parliament's renewed commitment to upholding the obligations of membership in the long term and pledged his delegation's active participation in the work of the 135th Assembly.

The Governing Council approved the request for reaffiliation from the Parliament of Swaziland.

(b) Situation of certain parliaments

The Secretary General said that actions were being taken to encourage new affiliations and reaffiliations to the Organization, and in that regard applications for reaffiliation were expected from the Central African Republic – where permanent governance institutions were being put in place and elections to the Senate were forthcoming – and the Marshall Islands.

The Executive Committee was monitoring events in Burundi, where the human rights situation was particularly worrying, and hoped that the Parliament of Burundi would work to promote inclusive dialogue and reduce tensions. Similarly, in Cambodia, tensions were rising and assurances had been

sought from the Cambodian delegation that the various parties would work together in a spirit of dialogue and that the cases currently before the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians would be resolved.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, disputes were rife over whether the President of the Republic was entitled to serve a third term of office. Unrest was increasing, particularly in Kinshasa, and had already resulted in several deaths. The Executive Committee had urged restraint and the pursuance of dialogue to resolve the political conflict. All parties were encouraged to work together to ensure that the election process could be pursued peacefully.

With regard to the situation in Eritrea, the IPU had little or no contact with the Parliament, despite efforts to engage, in particular to seek resolution of the cases of Eritrean Parliamentarians currently before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. Efforts were being made to seek inroads to dialogue through countries with good relations with Eritrea.

Despite the provision of technical assistance to the parliament of Guinea-Bissau, tensions and in-fighting in parliament persisted. The IPU was monitoring the situation closely, and remained in dialogue with the Speaker of the National Assembly, who would attend the 135th IPU Assembly.

Progress had been made in Haiti, where parliamentary and presidential elections had been due to take place. Unfortunately, Hurricane Matthew had recently struck the island and the elections had been delayed. The Executive Committee would continue to monitor the situation.

Little progress had been made in Libya, where a peculiar situation persisted in which two parliaments were in place. The IPU recognized the parliament in Tubrouk. The Executive Committee would remain engaged with that parliament and hoped that the crisis could be resolved.

In South Sudan, fighting had erupted despite a peace agreement having been put in place, and the Vice-President was again in exile. The Executive Committee would remain abreast of the situation and would report to the governing bodies in due course.

Despite challenges, the situation in Somalia was returning to normal: two houses of parliament were being established and presidential elections had been foreseen. Such positive developments were welcome.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, elections had taken place in April 2016 and a new parliament had been established, with a woman Speaker elected. While the Executive Committee had taken note of that progress, it had expressed grave concern regarding the ongoing crisis and recommended that the IPU continue to monitor the situation and engage with all parties to the conflict and consider how the Organization could contribute to the resolution of the conflict.

In Thailand, a situation of political uncertainty had persisted since 2014. A roadmap had been put in place leading to elections at the end of 2017, and a new Constitution was due to be enacted. The recent demise of the Thai King was not expected to affect implementation of the roadmap to democracy.

Turkey had been in a situation of turmoil since an attempted coup in July 2016, which had led to the loss of innocent lives. The IPU had issued a strong statement condemning any attempt to accede to power by violent means. The Organization had a technical assistance mission in Turkey and was remaining apprised of the situation.

The President said that he had visited Ankara earlier that week and had engaged in constructive discussions with the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey and with the parliamentary committees on gender equality and on human rights. He had highlighted the IPU's concerns with regard to the human rights of parliamentarians in Turkey. As well as the attempted coup, there had been an attack on parliament, which had constituted an attack against democracy and the basic freedoms of the Turkish people. While the distinction between immunity and impunity must never be forgotten, the blanket removal of parliamentary immunity was not acceptable. The IPU would remain engaged in dialogue with the Turkish authorities.

The Secretary General recalled that, at its previous session, the Governing Council had agreed that a mission should be sent to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to review the overall political situation including the human rights situation and assess how the IPU could contribute to resolving the crisis. That mission had not yet taken place owing inter alia to logistical impediments. A preliminary mission had been conducted by the Secretary General, who had reported back to the Executive Committee on the situation of political and economic crisis and institutional deadlock between the opposition-dominated parliament and the Government. He had held meetings with the President and Vice-President of the Republic, the Speaker of Parliament, the diplomatic community and members of civil society. The situation was eminently political and had ramifications for the welfare of the people of Venezuela. The only solution would be for both parties to the deadlock to

enter into dialogue, under the auspices of the regional body – UNASUR – and with the assistance of the former Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.

Lastly, Yemen had been embroiled in crisis since 2012; maintaining contact with the parliamentary authorities had been difficult. Interaction had increased over recent weeks and the presence of a delegation from Yemen at the 135th Assembly would afford an opportunity to engage in dialogue, in line with the efforts already undertaken by the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Yemen.

The President said that the IPU would continue to monitor the situation in all of the countries mentioned, pursuing consultations with the parliamentary authorities and engaging in dialogue where possible. When the IPU engaged in the promotion of dialogue and discussion it did so in line with the frameworks already in place, including the input of United Nations entities and in the context of United Nations resolutions. The IPU had a duty of care towards its Member Parliaments and was thus committed to help them tackle the challenges they faced by promoting the objectives of peace through dialogue.

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

(c) Observer status

The President announced that no requests for observer status had been received.

Item 4 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

**(a) On his activities since the 198th session of the Governing Council
(CL/199/4(a)-R.1)**

The President presented a summary of his report on activities since the 198th session of the Governing Council (CL/199/4(a)-R.1). The IPU was organizing a series of regional seminars to promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), two of which had been held thus far, one in the South-East Asia region, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the other in the Central and Eastern European Region in Bucharest, Romania. Such seminars afforded an opportunity to meet with heads of State and discuss the importance of multisectoral partnerships in the attainment of SDG 16 – the governance goal. Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement on climate change the Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change had been devised to help parliamentarians translate their statements into action. The President had visited the Russian Federation to discuss parliamentary diplomacy and had attended a meeting of the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Other visits had included a meeting with the Speaker of the National Assembly of Kuwait to discuss avenues for strengthening cooperation, and to the Lithuanian Parliament on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Lithuania's independence. He had also attended the discussion and adoption by the United Nations General Assembly in New York of resolution 70/298 on *Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union*, which had been supported by 77 co-sponsors. The resolution could serve to inspire national parliaments to access United Nations agencies at the national level. The new cooperation agreement concluded between the IPU and the United Nations provided a framework for more robust engagement at the institutional level between the IPU and the United Nations. While in New York, he had also attended a meeting of the Every Woman Every Child initiative, which was encouraging investment in women's, children's and adolescents' health, to ensure that they not only survived, but that they thrived and were able to transform society.

The President had also visited Kazakhstan to discuss nuclear non-proliferation. Kazakhstan was a shining example of the progress that could be made towards attaining a nuclear weapons-free world, having closed down the world's largest nuclear weapons test site and renounced its nuclear arsenal. Lastly, he had addressed the Congress of the International Peace Bureau. The Bureau had begun its journey at the same time as the IPU, focusing on peace while the IPU had focused on democracy. The links between democracy and peace were growing ever stronger and the two entities would therefore endeavour to increase their cooperation.

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

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President said that the Executive Committee had met for one and a half days immediately prior to the Governing Council's current session and had held productive discussions. It would hold a further meeting during the Assembly and would therefore report on its work at the last sitting of the Governing Council's session. Its deliberations and recommendations on the matters on the Governing Council's agenda would be presented under each relevant item.

Item 5 of the agenda

**INTERIM REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE IPU
SINCE THE 198th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**

(a) Oral report of the Secretary General

The Secretary General presented the interim report on his activities since the 134th Assembly in Lusaka and said that efforts were being made to put the IPU on the international radar screen by increasing its accessibility to partners in the international community, Member Parliaments and visiting guests, and making it as transparent, open and accessible as possible. Efforts to promote gender equality were continuing along three main lines: monitoring the participation of women in politics, increasing the number of women parliamentarians, and protecting women against violence. The IPU was engaged in gender equality activities in several countries, including Cote d'Ivoire, Mauritania, Sierra Leone and Turkey. Much of the Organization's work on human rights was done through its Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the 40th anniversary of which would be marked during the 135th Assembly. The Assembly would also see the launch of a new handbook on international humanitarian law, prepared jointly with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

IPU activities to strengthen parliaments had continued at the national level in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Myanmar and Palestine. At the global level, the Global Parliamentary Report would be issued in 2017. The 2016 edition of the World e-Parliament Report had been published, which described the use of new technologies to improve the work of parliaments. Efforts were being made to engage the IPU more effectively with its partners and to that end, work with the World Health Organization (WHO) had been strengthened. Funding agreements had been concluded with some Member Parliaments to support the work of the Organization. Both the President and the Secretary General continued to reach out to Member Parliaments to provide assistance and seek their support. Work on the SDGs continued, and the new cooperation agreement concluded between the IPU and the United Nations would provide greater scope for cooperation at the global, regional and country levels with the support of United Nations agencies on the ground, in particular UN Women, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

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

(b) International Day of Democracy 2016

(CL/199/5(b)-R.1)

The Secretary General introduced the report on the International Day of Democracy (CL/199/5(b)-R.1), which outlined the activities undertaken by parliaments in 17 countries to mark the International Day of Democracy on 15 September 2016. All Member Parliaments were encouraged to organize events to mark the Day. Any parliaments wishing to have their activities included in the report should provide the relevant information to the Secretariat and the report would be updated accordingly.

The Governing Council took note of the report on the International Day of Democracy.

(c) Update on the IPU archives

(CL/199/5(c)-R.1)

The Secretary General presented the update on plans for the IPU archives, for which a three-year timeline had been proposed. The funds required went beyond the scope of the Organization's core budget; funding from external sources would therefore be required for the project to be completed.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

Item 9 of the agenda

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

(CL/199/9-R.1)

The Secretary General presented the report on cooperation with the United Nations system (CL/199/9-R.1), which he said testified to the wealth of activities being carried out by the IPU in cooperation with United Nations entities.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

Item 16 of the agenda

OTHER MATTERS

Mr. M. Kavakebian (Islamic Republic of Iran) asked why the live Twitter feed for the 135th IPU Assembly was being streamed in the Governing Council. Some of the posts being shown were offensive to delegations present and should not be allowed in the Council chamber.

Mr. T. Doherty (Canada) said that restricting the Twitter feed would constitute a violation of freedom of expression.

Following a discussion in which the representatives of **Canada, Ghana, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran** and **Kenya** participated, **the President** said that the Governing Council should consider whether it wished to continue streaming the live Twitter feed in the Council chamber, and if so, under what guidelines. It was important to maintain a balance between full respect for freedom of expression, and preventing the dissemination of information that would detract from the Council's discussions. A suitable time would be found to discuss the matter further.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

The Secretary General announced that the quorum for the 199th session of the Governing Council was 114 delegates, given that 225 delegates were present at the first sitting of the Council.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.

Second sitting

Thursday, 27 October 2016

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

Item 6 of the agenda

FINANCIAL SITUATION OF THE IPU

(CL/199/6-R.1)

The Secretary General, presenting the report on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 July 2016 (CL/199/6-R.1), said that the overall financial situation of the Organization was positive, with budget performance on track and no discrepancies with regard to projected revenue or expenditure. Revenue from assessed contributions had been higher than projected, owing to the reaffiliation of Comoros and Egypt and the affiliation of Guyana, and the upgrade in status of the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States from Observer to Associate Member. Some CHF 2 million in voluntary contributions had been collected since the beginning of 2016, taking the total thus far to CHF 4.1 million. It was hoped that the target CHF 4.3 million as set in the 2016 budget would be reached by the end of the year. Although revenue from investments would not be known exactly until the end of the year, when interest would have accrued in the IPU's accounts, market performance suggested that the targets for the year would be reached.

Regarding spending, the 134th Assembly in Lusaka had cost 10 per cent more than anticipated, although with cost savings in other areas, overspending would likely amount overall to about 3 per cent. On management, governance and oversight, savings of 6 per cent had been made. Spending on visibility was also below target. Programme expenditure was on target from both the core budget and from voluntary contributions. Support services were on track. With regard to receipts, payments had been received to the tune of CHF 9.2 million. Several countries had paid their arrears and the table of unpaid contributions would be updated accordingly. The Working Capital Fund balance was CHF 8.5 million. Capital expenditures had been incurred to replace antiquated computer equipment for the Secretariat, and to invest in the development of the IPU website, which was being done with the support of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates. Lastly, the Legacy Staff Pension Fund for former IPU employees had assets of CHF 6.8 million to meet the pension commitments to 10 former staff members or their spouses and the residual benefits of five current employees.

Ms. M. Ionova (Ukraine) enquired whether any provision had been made in the 2017 budget for the holding of the second Assembly of 2017 in another location, such as Geneva, given that the venue of St. Petersburg had not yet been approved.

The Secretary General replied that provisions for that session had been made under Item 7 of the 2017 budget – Promote inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation.

Mr. F. Rabbi (Bangladesh) proposed that any dips into the Working Capital Fund should be prioritized rather than of a general nature. For example, to cover expenses relating to humanitarian activities or peacekeeping.

Mr. K. Ornfjäder (Sweden) explained that only if needed, CHF 119,000 would be used from the Working Capital Fund. In any case, that Fund would be replenished.

Mr. R. del Picchia, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Finance, confirmed the previous speaker's explanation, adding that a formal decision would have to precede any withdrawals from the Working Capital Fund and that the idea was to reduce any amounts taken from that Fund and reimburse them without delay.

The Governing Council took note of the report on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 July 2016.

The President recalled that at its previous meeting in Lusaka, Zambia, the Executive Committee had discussed the possibility of establishing a Parliamentary Solidarity Fund. The Executive Committee had considered a revised version of the proposal to establish the Fund, which had been prepared by the Secretariat, and recommended that the Governing Council approve the creation of the Fund.

It was so decided.

The President announced that two parliaments, Gambia and Somalia, had accumulated more than two years' of arrears in their assessed contributions, and had thus, in accordance with the Statutes and Rules of the IPU, lost their voting rights. The parliament of Djibouti had paid its arrears in full, and the parliament of South Sudan had paid part of its arrears; both parliaments were no longer subject to voting restrictions. While the parliaments of Congo and Honduras had been liable for suspension under Article 5.3 of the Statutes, indications had been received from Congo that sufficient payment to avoid suspension was imminent. With respect to Honduras, several countries from the Latin America and Caribbean Group (GRULAC) had recommended that Honduras should be encouraged to settle its arrears and retain full membership of the Organization. With that in mind, the Executive Committee recommended that the Council defer its decision to suspend those two parliaments until its next session, in the hope that sufficient payment would be made to retain their membership.

It was so decided.

Item 7 of the agenda

DRAFT PROGRAMME AND BUDGET FOR 2017
(CL/199/7-P.1)

Mr. R. del Picchia (France), Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Finance, presenting the draft programme and budget for 2017 (CL/199/7-P.1) and the results of the discussions thereon in the Executive Committee, said that 2017 was a year of transition between the two IPU strategies, and therefore the usual logframe that accompanied the budget had not been finalized, pending the adoption of the revised IPU Strategy for 2017-2021. Following the adoption of the Strategy, the Sub-Committee on Finance would make the relevant adjustments to the budget annex.

The 8.4 per cent reduction in assessed contributions in 2016 had resulted in a drop in resources, which had been difficult to offset. The Sub-Committee on Finance had therefore been requested to take CHF 119,000 from the Working Capital Fund as a transitional measure to bridge the funding gap if needed. The increase in spending of around CHF 297,000 would be to improve security at IPU Headquarters, strengthen communications and redesign the IPU website. A balance therefore needed to be struck between the reduction in income, the increase in spending and the withdrawals from the Working Capital Fund. The Sub-Committee had thus recommended a small increase – of 1.5 per cent – in assessed contributions, which would amount to CHF 150,000 in revenue, and which coincided with the entry into force of a revised scale of contributions patterned after the new United Nations scale. That revenue, along with savings generated by reductions in spending, would balance the 2017 budget. Despite those savings, all projects and programmes would be maintained.

Voluntary contributions also formed a key part of the Organization's funding; the President and the Secretary General had been to great lengths to harness voluntary funds, which had increased from CHF 3 million to CHF 4 million, and which would generate income from an 8 per cent charge on activities conducted using those funds. That being the case, only CHF 100,000 would potentially need to be taken from the Working Capital Fund. That Fund would only be used if absolutely necessary, which had not yet been the case.

The Governing Council approved the 2017 draft consolidated budget, as contained in document CL/199/7-P.1.

Item 8 of the agenda

IPU STRATEGY FOR 2017-2021
(CL/199/8-P.1)

The Secretary General, introducing the revised draft IPU Strategy for 2017-2021 (CL/199/8-P.1), said that the revision process had been thorough and consultative, and he therefore hoped that the document currently before the Council reflected the common will of the membership to focus the work of the Organization. Every effort had been made to capture the priority areas of work for the coming five years, consolidating the work done, rather than spreading the Organization too thinly.

The revised Strategy revisited the origins of the IPU, with a focus on peace-building. It emphasized the need for parliaments to contribute to delivering on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Work on gender equality and the empowerment of young parliamentarians had been separated into two strategic objectives to ensure sufficient attention would be paid to both areas of the

Organization's work. New areas of focus had also been introduced in Objective 4: contribute to peace building, conflict prevention and security, which included action on counter-terrorism and disarmament. The new Strategy also contained a list of enabling actions in five areas, which Member Parliaments considered necessary for the attainment of the objectives. The need to strengthen IPU's work with partners, in particular the United Nations was emphasized, along with the importance of using new technologies to support the work of the Organization. The Strategy set out a vision for the IPU, to be integrated into the 2017 budget.

Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia) welcomed the Strategy's emphasis on partnerships, which was a very important aspect of the work of the IPU.

The President added that the Strategy was an important means of documenting the core values of the Organization, and ensuring a focused, structured and organized approach to its work. Yearly workplans would be drawn up on the basis of the Strategy. Adequate resources would be essential to ensure that those plans could be implemented effectively.

The Governing Council approved the revised IPU Strategy for 2017-2021.

Item 10 of the agenda

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

(a) Regional seminar on *Parliaments and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for Central and Eastern Europe*
(CL/199/10(a)-R.1)

Mr. A.-C. Mitú (Romania), presenting the report contained in document CL/199/10(a)-R.1, said that the Regional Seminar in April 2016 had been organized jointly by the Parliament of Romania and the IPU as a follow-up to the regional meeting on SDGs implementation held in Bucharest in 2015. The seminar had focused on SDG16 – the "governance" goal – highlighting its particular relevance for parliaments. Participants had discussed how parliaments could mainstream and institutionalize the SDGs to enhance coherence at the policy level. They had recommended that parliaments should promote education for sustainable development as a catalyst, and stressed the need for parliaments to foster an enabling environment for dialogue and coordination between SDG stakeholders. Strong parliamentary commitment was essential to the attainment of the SDGs. The IPU SDGs Toolkit could be particularly useful in that regard.

(b) Regional seminar on *Harmonizing synergies for wide-ranging parliamentary actions against child trafficking and labour and strengthening South-South and Triangular cooperation*
(CL/199/10(b)-R.1)

The President drew the Governing Council's attention to the report contained in document CL/199/10(b)-R.1.

(c) Parliamentary side event at the World Health Assembly
(CL/199/10(c)-R.1)

Ms. P.E. Locatelli (Italy), delivered the report contained in document CL/199/10(c)-R.1, on the parliamentary side event held during the 69th World Health Assembly. The event had been held in recognition of parliamentarians' commitment to promoting health and well-being at the national and global levels, and had highlighted the steps to be taken to ensure accountability for health-related commitments and to become advocates for change through the key parliamentary role in passing legislation, assigning budgets and overseeing government action. Parliamentarians from around the world had shared examples of the bold action they had taken to address the needs of women, children and adolescents, and to place health at the top of national agendas. They had requested that the meeting become a regular event at future sessions of the World Health Assembly.

(d) Roundtable on water (for the Middle East region)
(CL/199/10(d)-R.1)

The President drew the Governing Council's attention to the report contained in document CL/199/10(d)-R.1.

**(e) Parliamentary meeting at the United Nations General Assembly
High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS
(CL/199/10(e)-R.1)**

Ms. G. Katuta (Zambia), presented the report contained in document CL/199/10(e)-R.1 and said that the event had highlighted the crucial role of national engagement in ending the AIDS epidemic. Participants had shared examples of actions taken to address the needs of populations in vulnerability. They had noted with concern, however, that subjective perceptions still prevailed over facts and evidence with regard to HIV/AIDS. In too many places, stigma and discrimination remained the main barrier to voluntary testing and treatment. To overcome that barrier, parliamentarians must assume the role of educators and role models. Several participants had raised concerns with regard to donor reliance for HIV treatment, with donor contributions reducing in countries that were transitioning from low- to middle-income. Participants had also pledged to continue peer-to-peer support.

**(f) 2016 Annual session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO
(CL/199/10(f)-R.1)**

Mr. K. Ornfjäder (Sweden), introducing the report contained in document CL/199/10(f)-R.1, said that the Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization (WTO) was a joint undertaking of the IPU and the European Union and served as a global forum to promote parliamentary action on international trade and development. The 2016 annual session, attended by more than 400 participants, had focused on the future of the WTO. One of the highlights of the session had been a hearing with WTO Deputy Director-General Karl Brauner. Participants had underscored the importance of all WTO members implementing the decisions in the 2014 “Bali Package” and the 2015 “Nairobi Package” and capitalizing on recent progress in trade negotiations. Given the importance of trade in services and therefore in development, greater efforts were required to increase the participation and integration of least developed countries in the global services economy. Supply chain barriers to trade should be reduced to enable small and medium enterprises to generate profit from the global value chain. The IPU should continue to work with the WTO to expedite the entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement concluded in Bali, by encouraging Member Parliaments ratify the Agreement.

**(g) World e-Parliament Conference
(CL/199/10(g)-R.1)**

The President drew the Governing Council’s attention to the report contained in document CL/199/10(g)-R.1.

**(h) Interregional seminar on parliamentary capacity building and
the further implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
(CL/199/10(h)-R.1)**

Mr. X. Wang (China), presenting the report contained in document CL/199/10(h)-R.1 said that the interregional seminar had been organized jointly by the IPU and the National People’s Congress of China. Discussions had focused on four areas: implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the “One Belt, One Road” initiative; attainment of the SDGs; and China’s national experience of putting the 2030 Agenda into practice. Chinese think tanks had helped to frame the discussions and field visits had been organized to Guangxi, Guangdong and Shanghai. Participants had agreed that political will was essential for the attainment of the SDGs and that parliamentarians had a key role to play in creating an enabling legal environment for cooperation. The seminar had culminated in a set of recommendations and actions to advance parliamentary engagement to attain the SDGs, with a focus on the importance of considering the Goals from a national perspective. China’s experiences in that regard had shown the importance of paying attention to the most marginalized sectors of society, and the transfer of new technologies was considered crucial to meeting the SDGs.

**(i) Official side event of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
on Mobilizing parliaments for the SDGs
(CL/199/10(i)-R.1)**

Mr. F. Hoohlo (Lesotho), presented the report contained in document CL/199/10(i)-R.1 on the parliamentary side event at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, which had been attended by 30 parliamentarians from 16 national delegations. A panel discussion had been

held, moderated by the Secretary General of the IPU. The presentations and ensuing debate had provided a good overview of how parliaments could, through their legislative, budgetary and oversight roles, contribute to the attainment of the SDGs. Participants had agreed that a parliamentary institutional memory would need to be preserved to maintain parliamentary involvement in efforts to meet the SDGs, since the composition of parliaments changed relatively frequently. Two parliaments had adopted parliamentary motions on the SDGs, and had reported that by debating those motions in parliament, awareness of the SDGs had been raised considerably. Parliamentarians should make an effort to get involved in their country's national 2030 Agenda implementation reviews. An SDG focal point in parliament would allow for greater policy coordination. The SDGs could only be achieved through an inclusive, participatory approach, with parliamentarians reaching out to their constituents as much as possible. The SDGs addressed issues at the forefront of the minds of parliamentarians and the public, and connected those issues in a coherent framework.

(j) Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament

Ms. A. Al Qubaisi (United Arab Emirates) said that the Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament would take place on 12 and 13 December 2016 in Abu Dhabi, under the theme *United for shaping the future*, and would also be attended by representatives of government, business, science, academia and civil society. The Summit would harness the expertise of the participants to institute change and so bring about sustainable prosperity and security and meet the challenges posed by a rapidly changing world. Those challenges were all interrelated and could only be met through a harmonized, united response between parliaments and partners – men and women. The Summit would culminate in the adoption of the Abu Dhabi Declaration, which would include actionable recommendations to pursue together.

An audiovisual presentation on the event was screened in parallel.

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

Item 11 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(a) Forum of Women Parliamentarians

(CL/199/11(a)-R.1)

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, presented the report contained in document CL/199/11(a)-R.1, and said that the Forum had met for the first time under that name, which reflected its true nature as a key permanent structure of the IPU. The Forum had centred its discussions on the work of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, and in particular the resolution on *The freedom of women to participate in political processes fully, safely and without interference: Building strong partnerships between men and women to achieve that objective*. The Forum had reflected on how to make parliament a safe and amenable place for women, and had emphasized the need to change negative attitudes and traditions that hindered women's participation in politics. Men were key allies in women's political endeavours and their contribution to promoting the role of women in politics was crucial. The Standing Committee had accepted all of the amendments that the Forum had proposed to the draft resolution.

A parity debate had been held on violence against members of parliament. Discussions had been informed by the work of the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and the newly released IPU Issues brief on harassment, intimidation and violence against women parliamentarians. When women were a minority in parliament they were more likely to become targets of abuse, stereotyping and stigmatization. Parliamentary action to end violence against women in politics was essential. Parliaments that tolerated harassment and violence against women were undermining their own democratic values. The Forum had also discussed the rights of women and girls in conflict, underlining the importance of health services, education and income-generating activities as essential means of preventing violence, early marriage and exploitation. Women must be part of the solution, and must be involved in the design of humanitarian assistance. Every effort must be made to implement United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, particularly by involving women in decision-making at all levels.

The President announced that the Forum of Women Parliamentarians had elected Ms. K. Beteta (Peru) to the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians.

The Governing Council took note of the election of Ms. Beteta.

(b) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians
(CL/199/11(b)-R.1, R.2 and P.1)

Mr. A.A. Gueye (Senegal), member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, reporting on the Committee's recent session in Geneva, said that during its session, which marked the 40th anniversary of its creation, the Committee had examined 28 cases concerning the situation of 242 parliamentarians in 12 countries. Hearings had been held with six delegations and complainants. Those meetings were essential for the Committee's work, since they allowed the Committee to enhance its understanding of the cases before it, and to express its concerns and exchange views.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Committee had before it the cases of two parliamentarians, Mr. Chalupa and Mr. Fayulu. Mr. Chalupa's case had been before the Committee for some time. He had been granted a passport on humanitarian grounds and allowed to seek medical care abroad. His nationality still posed a problem, however, and the Committee urged the authorities to regularize his situation as a matter of urgency, by recognizing his Congolese citizenship. With regard to Mr. Fayulu, who had been arbitrarily detained by the intelligence services, following which he had been seriously injured during an opposition rally, the Committee remained concerned about the lack of response from the Congolese judiciary, particularly since the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was increasingly tense. The Committee urged the authorities to conduct an independent inquiry and bring the perpetrators of the two incidents to justice.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee's decisions relating to the cases of Mr. Chalupa and Mr. Fayulu.

Ecuador

The Committee had before it the case of former member of parliament Mr. Jiménez Cabrera, who had been found guilty of defamation of the President of Ecuador in 2013. The Committee was deeply concerned that he had been imprisoned and heavily fined for what appeared to be the legitimate exercise of his right to freedom of expression. The Committee was concerned that further, identical allegations had been brought against him. The Committee sought clarification on the matter and whether the original sentence was still relevant.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee's decision relating to the case of Mr. Jiménez Cabrera.

Venezuela

The relations between the Parliament and the executive in Venezuela had never been more tense. The Committee had before it several new cases, in particular that of three opposition parliamentarians, whose parliamentary mandates had been suspended by a court decision 10 months previously with no further information. The Committee wished to organize a mission to Venezuela to discuss that and the other cases pending before it and therefore called on the Secretary General to organize such a mission as soon as possible.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee's decision relating to the cases of 20 Venezuelan parliamentarians.

Cambodia

Following its mission to Cambodia, the Committee had presented its preliminary conclusions and recommendations on the cases before it to the Governing Council at its previous session in Lusaka. The Committee's final conclusions confirmed its initial concerns. The Cambodian authorities had expressed their reservations to those conclusions, which had been annexed to the report currently before the Governing Council. No progress had been made with regard to solving the cases and the Committee called on the Cambodian authorities to seek solutions and resolve the cases of the 15 parliamentarians concerned as quickly as possible. The IPU stood ready to engage in dialogue and provide technical assistance to expedite the proceedings, if necessary.

Mr. Chiit Kimyeat (Cambodia), expressing his delegation's reservations to the decision of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that his delegation strongly opposed the decision, which took account of the position of the complainants only and had not taken due notice of

the opinions of the Cambodian authorities. There were legitimate criminal proceedings pending against Um Sam An, Kem Sokha and Thak Lany, which the Committee had not discussed at its recent meeting with the Cambodian delegation. He therefore considered that the Committee was not addressing those cases in the impartial manner in which it was mandated to.

Mr. A.A. Gueye (Senegal), Member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Committee upheld its mandate rigorously. The delegation of Cambodia had been heard, written responses had been received and taken into account, and during the Committee's mission to Cambodia the Committee delegation had heard the views of the authorities, the complainants and representatives of civil society. All sides of the cases had been taken into account in the Committee's mission conclusions. The Committee's report had drawn attention to the need to restore a culture of dialogue.

The Secretary General added that due note had been taken of the Cambodian delegation's reservations. The IPU would do its utmost to pursue dialogue with the Cambodian authorities in the hope that the cases would be resolved as soon as possible, and would report back to the Governing Council at its next session.

The Governing Council endorsed the Committee's decision relating to the cases of 15 Cambodian parliamentarians and took note of the Cambodian delegation's reservations.

Maldives

The Committee had recently sent a mission to the Maldives to continue investigations into the cases of 33 parliamentarians. He thanked the Maldivian authorities, which had ensured that the mission was able to fulfil its mandate. The mission's findings would be presented to the Governing Council at its next session. He wished to draw attention to the situation of Mr. Mahlouf, who had been imprisoned on grounds of obstructing police officers in the performance of their duties. The Committee expressed the hope that the authorities would take the necessary steps to allow him to serve his sentence under house arrest.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee decision relating to the cases of 33 parliamentarians in the Maldives.

Turkey

The Committee had recently been presented with the cases of some 55 Turkish parliamentarians from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), all of whom had been stripped of their parliamentary immunity without prior investigation and without any opportunity to defend themselves. They were accused on some 600 different counts and feared imminent arrest. The Committee considered that, given the seriousness of the cases and the current context in Turkey, it would be preferable to seek a comprehensive solution, rather than addressing each case individually. The Committee intended to work closely with the Turkish authorities to that end.

Ms. B. Aslan (Austria) said that only a policy of peace could reduce the number of refugees seeking safety and guarantee democracy. Two Kurdish politicians had been arrested in Turkey the previous day. That, and the cases before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, implied that the Turkish Government seemed to be preparing to imprison all pro-Kurdish HDP members. The President of Turkey had levelled a blanket accusation of terrorism, which was unacceptable, and appeared to be making plans to extend the Turkish State's operation to all Kurdish municipalities, where mayors were already being arrested. If people were deprived of their freedoms, they would fight to exert their rights. War and hardship were already too prevalent. Such unlawful behaviour must be stopped and the IPU must take immediate action in that regard.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee's decision relating to the cases of the 55 Turkish parliamentarians.

Oman

Since 2014, the Committee had before it the case of Mr. Al Mamari, a parliamentarian who had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment for participating in a public demonstration. In 2015, the Committee had visited Oman in the hope of seeking a solution to the case. Mr. Al Mamari had been released in May 2016 and the Committee thus proposed to close the case. The Committee welcomed

the goodwill and determination of the Speaker of the Majlis a'Shura, whose efforts had contributed to the settlement of the case. The Committee regretted, however, that Mr. Al Mamari had served most of his sentence by the time of his release.

The Governing Council unanimously endorsed the Committee's decision relating to the case of Mr. Al Mamari.

Fiji

The Committee had before it the cases of opposition parliamentarians, Ms. Draunidalo and Mr. Tikoca, who had been suspended from parliament on grounds of statements they had made in parliament. The Committee considered that their statements had been within their right to freedom of expression and that the period of their suspension was disproportionate. It therefore called on the Parliament of Fiji to take the necessary measures to enable them to resume their parliamentary mandates.

Ms. M. Vuniwaqa (Fiji) stated her delegation's reservations to the resolutions regarding the two parliamentarians in question and expressed concern that Fiji's constitutional provisions with regard to freedom of expression had not been taken into consideration. The Fijian Constitution limited freedom of expression when related to incitement of hatred on grounds of discrimination, as had been the case with the two parliamentarians in question.

Mr. A.A. Gueye (Senegal), Member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that while domestic legislation had been taken into account, the Committee had also taken account of international law in its understanding of the situation.

The Governing Council endorsed the Committee's decision relating to the cases of Fijian parliamentarians, Ms. Draunidalo and Mr Tikoca, and took note of the Fijian delegation's reservations.

Mr. A.A. Gueye (Senegal), Member of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that parliaments and human rights were inextricably linked. When the rights of parliamentarians were violated in a particular country, the very institution of parliament was threatened and the world's parliaments were weakened. Parliamentary solidarity was therefore essential, and was the key to the Committee's work.

The President congratulated the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians on its 40th anniversary, and said that its work was unique in the world. He announced that the Committee was required to elect one member to replace Mr. J.-P. Letelier (Chile), whose term of office had come to an end. The candidature of Mr. F. Pinedo (Argentina) had been received. He took it that the Council wished to approve that candidature.

It was so decided.

Launch of the Handbook for Parliamentarians on International Humanitarian Law

Ms. C. Beerli (Vice-President, ICRC) said that that the ICRC and the IPU had been strong partners since their establishment. International humanitarian law was not an abstract concept, but rather had developed into a strong, protective framework that must be respected. Enhancing that respect was the most important way to improve the lives of all people affected by armed conflict. Parliamentarians were at the forefront of efforts to ensure that international humanitarian law was implemented properly. The Handbook offered practical guidance on how to play that role, provided model instruments and reference materials to assist countries in acceding to international humanitarian treaties, and described the tools available to facilitate the full implementation of international humanitarian law.

The measures taken during peacetime were extremely important: the better the understanding of concepts of international humanitarian law during times of peace, the more likely the application of those concepts during times of war. Parliaments had the power of change. The possibilities for parliamentary action were numerous: voting for the ratification of international instruments and passing implementing legislation, ensuring that military and security forces were adequately trained, and budgeting to ensure that the necessary resources were made available for implementation and activities. The responsibility was collective and parliamentarians must consider how they could make a difference within their sphere of influence.

The IPU President, Secretary General and the Vice-President of the ICRC launched the joint Handbook on International Humanitarian Law.

(c) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/199/11(c)-R.1 and P.1)

Ms. D. Pascal Allende (Chile), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, delivered the report contained in document CL/199/11(c)-R.1. The Committee had considered a variety of views regarding the possibilities for fostering peace in the region. A roundtable discussion on water had been held, focussing on the role of water, science and technology in promoting dialogue and cooperation. Participants had included technical experts and researchers. During its session, the Committee had heard a presentation from a member of the Israeli Knesset, who had underscored that fostering collective innovation and regional cooperation on water and other issues could bring countries together and help end the conflict. Parliaments had a role to play in promoting that approach. The Committee had decided to hold another such roundtable in future, and had concluded with expressions of goodwill on the part of all those present to work towards achieving peace in the Middle East.

The President said that the Committee's work was an excellent example of the benefits of focussing discussions on the common issues that brought parties together and expressed his hope that the Committee's work would continue to contribute to seeking peace and stability in the Middle East. He announced that the Committee on Middle East Questions had decided to amend its Rules to align them with the Rules of other IPU bodies. He took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the amendments to the Committee's Rules.

It was so decided.

(d) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/199/11(d)-R.1, P.1 and P.2)

Ms. M. Haj Hassan Osman (Sudan), President of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, presented the report contained in document CL/199/11(d)-R.1 and briefed the Governing Council on the recent mission to Lebanon to assess the humanitarian impact of the refugee crisis on the host community. A poignant Power Point presentation was screened in parallel. The delegation had met with Syrian refugees in informal settlements, community centres and health facilities, as well as Palestinian refugees, representatives of the Government and parliament, including the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the National Assembly. The delegation had also been briefed by representatives of UNHCR, the ICRC and several NGOs.

The Lebanese Government estimated that there were some 1.5 million refugees in Lebanon, which was the highest number of refugees per capita of local population in the world. Some 500 000 Palestinian refugees had been settled. Syrian refugees were found in urban and rural areas alike, in informal settlements. There were no refugee camps in Lebanon, and the situation was dramatic. Neighbouring countries and international entities providing assistance to Lebanon had been overwhelmed by the magnitude of needs. While the immediate humanitarian response to the ongoing influx was rapid, its sustainability was a serious problem. More than 50 per cent of Syrian refugees were living below the extreme poverty line, and thus could not afford the fees to obtain a residence permit; many had experienced difficulties in obtaining legal status. The real and perceived risks of arrest and detention were high. Refugees were not entitled to work in Lebanon, which resulted in a higher dependence on humanitarian aid and increased debt.

The impact on the host community had been considerable. The World Bank estimated that, since 2012, Lebanon had incurred losses of about US\$ 13.1 billion due to the crisis. The strain on service delivery for the health, education and security sectors was enormous, and the sense of unfairness and frustration among the population was deepening. Some one million children in Lebanon lived in vulnerable conditions. Despite efforts to provide universal education for children, there was a dearth of places in schools. The absence of an immediate political solution to the Syrian conflict meant that medium-term solutions must be found for refugees and local populations. The delegation had been astounded by the magnitude of the human tragedy, yet had been impressed by the scope of the response and the generosity of the Lebanese authorities and people to assist the Syrian population.

The Committee advocated for increasing investment to generate the economic growth that would enable Lebanon to cope with the crisis and lead to job creation. IPU Member Parliaments should mobilize funds to that end and to support education in Lebanon. A sustainable political solution

to the crisis must be found. The Committee thanked the authorities and partners in Lebanon who had done their utmost to facilitate the mission's work.

Mr. Y. Jaber (Lebanon) thanked the members of the delegation who had conducted the visit, and the IPU Secretariat for having organized the mission. He agreed with all of the Committee's recommendations and hoped that they would receive the support of the Governing Council.

Ms. H. Bsisu (Jordan) said that the challenges faced by Lebanon were indeed very real and were also faced by other host countries, such as Jordan, where the burden on economic resources, infrastructure, social cohesion and basic services was affecting the host and refugee communities alike. Sustainable support was essential, and should include all countries in the region through a holistic approach, to address the crisis on a humanitarian basis and acknowledge the huge burdens being placed on countries that were already struggling with their own issues. Human rights were universal and must therefore apply to all those living in a given country, whether they were the members of the host community or refugees.

Mr. A. Al-Ahmad (Palestine) said that his delegation supported the mission's conclusions and recommendations and hoped that refugees, whatever their origin, would be taken into consideration by parliaments. He wished to draw attention to the situation of Palestinian refugees, whose suffering had been even further exacerbated by the Syrian crisis, and who had been forced to flee the Syrian Arab Republic and once again find refuge, this time in Lebanon.

Ms. H. Abbas (Syrian Arab Republic) said that she hoped the parliamentarians of the world would support the Syrian Arab Republic in its efforts to seek a political solution, which was the only viable solution that would enable Syrian refugees to return home. Her delegation had hoped that the 135th IPU Assembly would select an emergency agenda item on terrorism, which was the root cause of the Syrian crisis.

The President announced that the Governing Council was required to elect three members of the Committee. Thus far, only two candidatures had been received, from Mr. K. Zulushev (Kyrgyzstan) and Ms. D. Figuera (Venezuela). He took it that the Governing Council wished to elect those candidates.

It was so decided.

(e) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/199/11(e)-R.1)

Mr. A. Jasem Ahmed (United Arab Emirates) presented the report contained in document CL/199/11(e)-R.1, and said that the Gender Partnership Group had reviewed implementation of the IPU's gender mainstreaming strategy and had assessed women's participation in the 135th Assembly. While the Assembly had the highest number of women participants to date, it was not the highest percentage. Consideration must therefore be given to how to increase the proportion of women's representation. Of the participating delegations registered with two or more participants, 14 were composed exclusively of men. That number must be reduced. A clear message should be sent to Member Parliaments that gender parity in delegations to the Assembly was not negotiable. The Group was ready to advise delegations and assist in finding ways to promote women's participation.

Achieving gender balance in IPU structures had also been discussed. To that end, the Group had agreed on a proposal to amend the IPU Statutes to increase the quota for women's membership of the Executive Committee from 20 to 30 percent, and hoped the proposed amendment would be adopted at the 136th Assembly in 2017. Discussions and consultations on how to meet that target would continue and every effort should be made to promote it among the geopolitical groups and individual delegations. The Group had considered the IPU Issues brief on sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians, which was a significant piece of research that shed light on a significant obstacle to democracy and gender equality in politics.

The President announced that there was one vacancy to fill in the Gender Partnership Group and Mr. A. Jasem Ahmed (United Arab Emirates) had submitted his candidature. He took it that the Governing Council wished to elect Mr. Jasem Ahmed.

It was so decided.

(f) Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
(CL/199/11(f)-R.1 and P.1)

Ms. P. Locatelli (Italy), delivered the report contained in document CL/199/11(f)-R.1 and said that the Advisory Group had discussed a draft proposal to change its mandate in light of the revised IPU Strategy, the SDGs and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. The main aspects of the Group's work would continue to be women's, children's and adolescents' health, including HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Attention would also be given to universal health coverage. The Group had decided to pursue discussions on its name, but had accepted Advisory Group on Health as a temporary working title.

The Group had discussed how to align the implementation of the IPU resolution on *Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children* with new developments in women's and children's health. A draft addendum to the resolution had been discussed, which would be subject to further input from technical partners before being submitted for adoption at the 136th IPU Assembly. The Group had also discussed cooperation with WHO on effective legislation to end child marriage and had recommended that greater consideration be given to the issue of early pregnancies and their effects on the lives of girls and women. Lastly, the Group had discussed preparations for the parliamentary side event at the 70th World Health Assembly.

During the current session of the IPU Assembly the Group, jointly with WHO and the Partnership for Maternal and Child Health, had organized a side event on *Leaving no-one behind: Parliaments at the forefront of protecting women's, children's and adolescents' health in migration crises, including humanitarian and fragile settings*. The event had shown the urgent need to ensure the right to health for all, including migrant populations, and had highlighted the role of parliaments in that regard.

(g) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/199/11(g)-R.1)

Mr. S. Alremeithi (United Arab Emirates), President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, presented the report contained in document CL/199/11(g)-R.1 said that more young parliamentarians than ever before were present at the 135th IPU Assembly. The Forum had elected three new members and was seeking to increase its membership even further.

The Forum had considered reports from countries and had exchanged information on best practices and experience with regard to reducing the minimum voting age. Efforts to encourage young people to get involved in politics had not always borne fruit: challenges – particularly financial obstacles – remained to standing for office. Consideration should be given to setting quotas for youth participation and raising public awareness to enable young people to stand for local election and work their way up to national parliaments. The Forum had also considered how to increase young people's participation in the work of the IPU and had decided to put a proposal to the Executive Committee to grant the President of the Forum an *ex officio* seat on the Executive Committee. Measures should be taken to facilitate the inclusion of young people in national delegations to IPU assemblies, through encouragement rather than sanctions.

The Forum had underscored the critical importance of cooperation with other parliamentarians to promote youth participation, and in particular to encourage and facilitate the participation of young women parliamentarians. Tribute had been paid to Jo Cox, the British woman parliamentarian who had been murdered while on parliamentary duties in her constituency earlier in 2016. A discussion had been held on human rights abuses as precursors to conflict and the victimization of young people, as well as their vulnerability to violence and susceptibility to radicalization. Youth organizations and advocates must be recognized as important allies in parliaments' efforts to identify human rights abuses and bring those abuses to an end.

Item 12 of the agenda

136th IPU ASSEMBLY (DHAKA, BANGLADESH, 1-5 APRIL 2017)

The Secretary General recalled that at its previous session, the Governing Council had taken the decision to accept the invitation from Bangladesh to host the 136th IPU Assembly. The President of

the IPU was personally involved in the preparations for the Assembly and all organizational aspects were being duly considered. The Executive Committee had been apprised of the arrangements made. The delegation of Bangladesh had provided assurances that the requisite measures were being taken to guarantee the security and safety of all participants. The Executive Committee had taken note of the information before it and had confirmed its recommendation for the IPU to hold its 136th Assembly in Dhaka on 1-5 April 2017.

The Governing Council endorsed the Executive Committee's recommendation.

Mr. F. Rabbi (Bangladesh) thanked the Governing Council and the Executive Committee for the confidence they had shown in the Parliament of Bangladesh, which looked forward to hosting the 136th IPU Assembly in Dhaka.

Item 13 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS

(CL/199/13-P.1)

(a) Statutory meetings

The President recalled that during its previous session in Lusaka, the Governing Council had adopted a resolution on the preliminary approval of the Russian Federation as the host of the 137th IPU Assembly, pending the requirements of a technical assessment being met. Two IPU assessment missions had since been conducted, the conclusions of which had been examined by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee recommended that the Governing Council confirm its decision to hold the 137th Assembly in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation.

Ms. M. Ionova (Ukraine) said that notwithstanding the fact that the Russian Federation had met the technical requirements to host an IPU Assembly, agreeing to hold the 137th Assembly in St. Petersburg was tantamount to encouraging an aggressor State. She urged IPU Members to vote against holding the 137th Assembly in St. Petersburg, adding that they should not be duped into thinking that there would be free and open dialogue at an Assembly in Russia. Nor should they turn a blind eye to the illegal acts committed by Russia and recognized as such by all international organizations. The Russian Federation had failed to enter into dialogue with Ukraine during the current Assembly. Over the past eight years, it had invaded Georgia, occupied Crimea and started bloody wars in the Donetsk and Lugansk regions in Ukraine, destroying the homes and livelihoods of the people and taking the lives of the military and civilians alike. The Russian Federation had been responsible for the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17, and had a significant hand in the humanitarian crisis currently raging in Aleppo, in the Syrian Arab Republic. She requested that a roll-call vote be held, in line with Rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure of the Governing Council, to determine whether the Governing Council was indeed in favour of allowing the Russian Federation to host the 137th Assembly.

The President announced that a roll-call vote would be held to determine whether the Governing Council wished to reconfirm its decision to hold the 137th IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation. He reminded participants of the voting procedure.

Following a roll-call vote, the decision of the Governing Council to hold the 137th IPU Assembly in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, was upheld.

Mr. B. Tarasyuk (Ukraine) expressed his appreciation for the Governing Council's willingness to follow the Rules of Procedure on an issue of great importance for his delegation. He remained, however, deeply concerned by the decision. His delegation would boycott the Assembly, and encouraged other delegations that wished to uphold the values of human rights and peace to do the same.

The President said he was pleased that the delegation of the Ukraine had been able to exercise its democratic rights as a member of the Governing Council and hoped that it would in fact attend the 137th Assembly. Having voted against the decision to host the Assembly in St. Petersburg would in no way impede any delegation's right to participate. Dissent was fundamental to democracy.

Ms. V. Matvienko (Russian Federation) expressed her delegation's gratitude to the Governing Council for having taken the decision to allow the Russian Federation to host the 137th IPU Assembly. The Assembly would afford a valuable opportunity for the Russian Federation to deepen its

cooperation with the IPU and to promote equal and open dialogue. The statement made by the delegation of Ukraine was regrettable. All parliaments wishing to participate in the Assembly would be welcome to do so. There would be no limitations imposed by the Russian authorities; the requisite guarantees in that regard had already been provided. St. Petersburg had already hosted several high-level forums and events and had all the requisite infrastructure in place to host a successful IPU Assembly.

An audiovisual presentation was made showcasing St. Petersburg.

The Secretary General announced that no further offers had been made to host future IPU Assemblies. The 138th Assembly would therefore be held in Geneva, unless an alternative offer was made.

(b) Specialized meetings and other events

The Secretary General presented the list of forthcoming specialized meetings and other events, many of which the Governing Council had already approved, as contained in document CL/199/13-P.1. None of the proposed meetings would have any impact on the Organization's core budget. Others, organized since the publication of that document, required the Council's approval. Viet Nam had offered to host a regional seminar for the Asia-Pacific region on implementation of the SDGs. It was proposed that the Governing Council should mandate the Secretary General to continue discussions with the Vietnamese authorities on the substance of that proposal. While the meeting would be for the Asia-Pacific region, representatives of other regions would be welcome to attend for the purposes of sharing experiences and best practices. The other meeting being drawn to the Council's attention would be hosted by the Parliament of Mexico, on the financial inclusion of women, to take place in the first quarter of 2017. There would be no financial implications for the IPU.

Mr. A. Touizi (Morocco) said that Morocco had also offered to host a regional meeting for the Middle East, but had not received a response from the Secretariat. He hoped that a reply would be forthcoming.

The President said he welcomed the offer from Morocco, which would surely be accepted, and said that the meeting would be added to the list of forthcoming events and that the Secretariat would discuss the details with the Moroccan delegation.

The Governing Council approved the schedule of future inter-parliamentary meetings.

Item 14 of the agenda

APPOINTMENT OF TWO INTERNAL AUDITORS FOR 2017
(CL/199/14-P.1 and P.2)

The President announced that candidatures for the two internal auditor positions had been received from Mr. K. Ornfjäder (Sweden) and Mr. G. Cuevas Barrón (Mexico). He took it that the Governing Council wished to appoint both candidates.

It was so decided.

Item 15 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(CL/199/15-P.1 to P.4)

The President announced that the Governing Council was required to elect three new members of the Executive Committee to replace Ms. C. Cerqueira (Angola) and Mr. Trang Van Hang (Viet Nam) who were no longer members of parliament, and Mr. D. Vivas (Venezuela), whose term on the Committee had ended. The candidatures of Ms. I. Oliveira Valente (Angola) and Mr. Nguyen Van Giau (Viet Nam) had been received to complete the terms of their predecessors, and the candidature of Ms. M.Y. Ferrer Gómez (Cuba) had been received to replace Mr. Vivas. He took it that the Council wished to elect those three candidates to the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 16 of the agenda

OTHER BUSINESS

Launch of the new IPU website

The Secretary General announced that the new IPU website, which had been developed with generous technical and financial assistance from the parliament of the United Arab Emirates, was ready to be launched. The new site represented the IPU's visual identity: it was dynamic, interactive and was available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. More features would be added over time to reflect the needs of the IPU's target audience. Some of the content was still being translated, and a second module comprising a document management system would be developed by May 2017.

The President said he hoped the new website would enable the IPU and its constituents to engage better as a community. IPU TV would be launched at the 136th Assembly in Dhaka. He welcomed the partnership with the United Arab Emirates, which had greatly facilitated the development of the website.

The new IPU website was launched.

Tribute to Mr. Mohamed Amani, Head of the Documents Reproduction Service

The Secretary General said that Mr. Mohamed Amani would be retiring at the end of the year after over 20 years of sterling service to the IPU. Having been in charge of the Documents Reproduction Service for many years, he was a familiar face to several delegates. He thanked Mr. Amani for his dedication to the Organization and wished him a happy retirement, urging Members to bid him farewell at the current Assembly, which would be his last.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.