



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

CL/200/SR.1
18 May 2017

Summary records of the Governing Council

200th session

2 and 5 April 2017

**Bangabandhu International Convention Centre (BICC)
Dhaka (Bangladesh)**

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First sitting

Sunday, 2 April 2017

The meeting 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.

The President, declaring open the 200th session of the Governing Council, welcomed participants to his home country of Bangladesh and drew attention to the availability of a new mobile application for downloading all documents pertaining to the 136th Assembly and related meetings, which had been developed in pursuance of the IPU's PaperSmart policy aimed at reducing the quantity of printed materials by up to one quarter. A further goal, he said, was to offset the carbon footprint produced by participants - and in turn achieve the first-ever "Green Assembly" - through such initiatives as the planting of saplings by each delegation at the country's Parliament House and the distribution of improved cooking stoves to Bangladeshi households in order to reduce deaths from indoor air pollution.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

(CL/200/A.1)

The revised provisional agenda (CL/200/A.1) was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 199th SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

(CL/199/SR.1)

The summary records of the 199th session of the Governing Council (CL/199/SR.1) held in Geneva in October 2016 were approved.

Item 3 of the agenda

PROPOSALS FOR THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE 136th ASSEMBLY

At the proposal of Mr. P. Matibini (Zambia), seconded by Ms. J. Luveni (Fiji), Ms. S.S. Chaudhury (Bangladesh), Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, was elected by acclamation to serve as President of the 136th IPU Assembly.

Item 4 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP

(a) Requests for affiliation and reaffiliation to the IPU

(CL/200/4(a)-P.1)

The President, drawing attention to the decisions set out in document CL/200/4(a)-P.1 in favour of the request for reaffiliation submitted by the National Assembly of the Central African Republic and that for affiliation submitted by the Parliament of Tuvalu, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve those two decisions, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Mr. T. Baïkoua (Central African Republic) said that, following its prolonged absence from the membership, his Parliament was honoured to be reaffiliated with the IPU. The military and political problems facing his country had now ended in the wake of the transition period during which a constitutional referendum had been held, in addition to presidential and parliamentary elections. He expressed sincere gratitude to the IPU for its response to the request for reaffiliation submitted by the country's new National Assembly shortly after it had commenced its functions in May 2016.

Mr. O. Tauteleimalae Tausi (Tuvalu) said that it was both an honour and a privilege for him to attend the 136th IPU Assembly on behalf of the small independent island nation of Tuvalu, the colonial history of which he outlined, in addition to the Westminster system of government now in place. The country's Constitution was soon to be reviewed with the aim of strengthening parliamentary oversight of the executive and addressing other issues that impeded the true government of the people by the people. He therefore requested assistance from the IPU in that major undertaking.

The President, extending a warm welcome to the two new Members and looking forward to a mutually beneficial relationship with both, said that the IPU now comprised a total of 173 Members and 11 Associate Members. All IPU Members enjoyed equal rights and privileges, with no power of veto, and the hope was that, by way of its assistance to smaller parliaments, the newly-established Parliamentary Solidarity Fund would bring the Organization closer still to its goal of universal membership.

The Secretary General added that observer delegations from Brunei Darussalam, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu were attending the current Assembly with a potential view to affiliation with the IPU. The IPU also looked forward to a positive outcome from the recent consultations held to that same end with the Parliaments of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

(b) Situation of certain Members

The Secretary General, reporting on the situation of certain Members and additionally communicating the related decisions recommended by the Executive Committee for approval by the Governing Council, said that no parliaments had been unconstitutionally dissolved since the 135th IPU Assembly in Geneva.

Concerning the first of the situations it had reviewed, namely that in Burundi, the Executive Committee had taken note of recent developments in the peace negotiations under way between the parties to the crisis that had erupted in 2015 following the decision of the country's incumbent leader to run for a third term of office. After furthermore taking into account his own consultations with relevant stakeholders, including various parliamentary authorities, as well as politicians living in exile for fear of their safety, the Committee had recommended that the IPU continue to monitor the situation and to offer its good offices with a view to convening a meeting of the conflicting parties at IPU Headquarters in Geneva in the interest of promoting an inclusive dialogue.

In the case of Cambodia, where tensions were rising in the wake of recent developments, the Committee had taken note of amendments to the Standing Orders of the National Assembly, pursuant to which minority leader status was now denied to opposition leaders, and of planned amendments to the electoral laws so as to permit the dissolution of political parties with leaders who had criminal convictions. Given in addition the circumstances of the self-exiled opposition leader Mr. Sam Rainsy, the Committee had concluded that the political atmosphere in Cambodia was not conducive to the satisfactory holding of local elections in June 2017 or of subsequent parliamentary elections in 2018. It therefore recommended that the IPU should seek a hearing on the matter with the Cambodian delegation to the Assembly and encourage the concerned parties to work towards appeasement and consensus on the best way forward. He added that the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was engaged in dialogue with the Cambodian authorities concerning the cases of eight Cambodian parliamentarians that remained under its consideration.

As to the Central African Republic, the Committee had recommended that it should be removed from the list of parliaments under scrutiny in the light of recent developments bringing the country back to normalcy and on the understanding that elections for its Senate would be held as envisaged under the country's Constitution at the earliest opportunity.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, political stakeholders had agreed in December 2016 that the President would not seek a third term of office and would instead leave power after the elections scheduled for December 2017. The agreement had since been cast into doubt, however, as a result of subsequent developments. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the IPU continue to monitor the situation in the hope that the elections would indeed take place as agreed and lead to the establishment of a fully-fledged parliament in the country.

Concerning the situation in Eritrea, which was not in fact a Member of the IPU, information remained elusive. The Committee therefore recommended that the IPU should continue to monitor the situation, including through information received from others in the region, or indeed from those with historical ties with Eritrea, on which it could base its decisions concerning the course of action to be pursued.

In the case of the Gambia, although the crisis provoked by the former President's initial refusal to relinquish power after losing the recent election had since been resolved, it appeared that no elections for a new parliament had yet been held as scheduled. The Committee therefore recommended that the IPU should remain seized of the matter and also urge the Gambian authorities to organize parliamentary elections as soon as possible.

With respect to Guinea-Bissau, the IPU had received a request for assistance in settling the parliamentary deadlock created by internal wrangling. The Committee therefore recommended that the IPU continue to monitor the situation and entrust the Secretary General to pursue consultations with the authorities concerning the potential role of the IPU as a mediator in the crisis.

As to Haiti, the functioning of its Parliament had been persistently challenged by, inter alia, the recurrence of natural disasters. The Committee consequently recommended that the IPU offer capacity-building assistance to the Parliament and call for the 10 vacant seats in the country's Senate to be promptly filled.

In the case of Libya, where there were two rival parliaments, the Committee recommended that the IPU remain seized of the situation and engage with the Tobruk-based parliament - internationally recognized as the country's official legislature - in order to determine how best to assist it in the discharge of its mandate.

In Somalia, there had been positive institutional developments after years of turmoil and yet parliamentarians had been reportedly attacked and even killed in incidents strongly condemned by the IPU in its role as defender of the human rights of parliamentarians. Given the challenging circumstances in which the Somali Parliament thus functioned, the Committee recommended that the IPU offer its technical assistance in the interest of consolidating the democratic process under way in the country and promoting a full return to normalcy.

With regard to South Sudan, an enlarged transitional parliament comprising numerous political factions had been established in accordance with the peace agreement reached in 2015. The country's former Vice-President had once more been forced into exile for fear of his life, however, and the continuing series of crises had now been exacerbated by fighting among the warring parties, which had led to mass displacement of populations and the threat of famine. Focusing on the humanitarian situation, the Executive Committee had thus recommended that the IPU continue to monitor events and provide assistance, where possible, towards resolving the crisis. The IPU had in fact already issued a strong statement calling on the international community and parliaments to take action to avert the famine looming not only in South Sudan but also in Eastern Kenya, Somalia and Yemen.

Concerning the Syrian Arab Republic, where the People's Assembly elected in 2016 had a vital part to play in the efforts aimed at resolving the crisis, the Executive Committee had taken note of recent developments and of consultations, including those the Secretary General himself had conducted, with the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Syria. Confident that the IPU could play a substantial role in bringing together the Syrian parties, the Committee had floated the possibility of convening a meeting of key Syrian parliamentarians and diaspora groups in Geneva in order to discuss the way forward. At its final meeting before the close of the Assembly, it would further explore the options for engaging with the Syrian Parliament and other Syrian stakeholders, as well as consider the issuance of an IPU statement in support of the various United Nations and regional initiatives aimed at bringing peace to the country.

The President, emphasizing the added value of an independent approach to such situations on the part of parliamentarians seeking to do what was right, confirmed that the IPU was currently considering the establishment of a working group to explore the options for broadening its scope of engagement with Syrian actors by reaching out to all those involved in the conflict

The Secretary General, referring to the case of Thailand, recalled that the IPU had provided technical assistance to the interim national legislature in place since 2014 and continued its monitoring of the situation, which had recently been thrown into uncertainty. In particular, the new Constitution approved by referendum in August 2016 had not received royal assent at the time of the then monarch's death in October of that year and amendments since requested by his successor were still under consideration. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that the IPU should keep track of the situation and urge the Thai authorities to carry through their intention to hold in the second quarter of 2018, if not earlier, the parliamentary elections originally scheduled for 2017.

In response to a question from **Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden)** concerning the membership status of parliaments that - as in Thailand - had successively failed to resume their normal functions, the Secretary General said that there was nothing in the IPU Statutes to suggest that such parliaments should instead be treated as observers. The functions of the dissolved Thai parliament had been assumed by an interim legislature, which was admittedly not ideal but which nonetheless met the IPU membership requirements. In such instances, however, the IPU persistently emphasized to the concerned authorities the need for action to ensure that a fully-fledged parliament was installed as swiftly as possible.

The President added that the IPU made every effort to give Members the benefit of the doubt in such situations but would take decisive action in the event that its good faith was found to be misplaced. It would meanwhile ensure that the Thai delegation was apprised of the concern voiced about the ongoing situation of its Parliament.

The Secretary General, turning to the situation in Turkey, said that the country's Parliament was again functioning normally following the attempted coup in 2016. The impending referendum on constitutional amendments designed to strengthen presidential powers was a source of concern, however, as were the reports of political arrests and of parliamentarians imprisoned on charges of terrorism, concerning whom the IPU was seeking further information from the Turkish authorities, including through a potential mission by its Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The Committee recommended that the IPU continue to engage with the authorities to that end and to monitor the situation closely.

The President said that the IPU would indeed seek to use its good offices to promote dialogue aimed at addressing the deeper political issues behind the ongoing crisis in Turkey through reconciliation with the Kurdish community.

The Secretary General, speaking on the situation in Venezuela, said that the IPU had continued to monitor events in that country following the parliamentary elections in 2015, since when the opposition holding the majority of seats had remained in conflict with the Government. On the basis of the IPU's mediation efforts on the ground, the Executive Committee recommended that the IPU should work to promote meaningful dialogue between the two sides and also seek a hearing with the Venezuelan delegation to the current Assembly so as to enhance its understanding of the situation in the hope of finding ways forward. On that score, he was pleased to note the overnight media reports that the earlier decision to strip the country's legislature of its powers had been reversed.

Mr. J.G. Correa (Venezuela) said that those reports were as yet unofficial but extended an invitation from the Speaker of the Venezuelan National Assembly for a delegation from the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to visit the country in order to assess the human rights situation for itself.

The Secretary General replied that the long-standing wish of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians to undertake such a mission had not yet materialized for a variety of reasons but remained firmly on the cards. The IPU was equally keen to address the country's political situation, however, on the premise that progress in that sphere would also promote a resolution of the human rights situation with which it was inextricably linked.

Concerning the case of Yemen, he recalled that the Parliament elected in 2003 was now divided into two factions - one based in Sana'a and the other in Aden - as a result of the civil strife taking place in the country. The IPU had not as yet determined, however, which of the two was the legitimate representative of the Yemeni people. Although both factions had been invited to the current IPU Assembly with a view to promoting a peace dialogue between them, the Sana'a-based faction had failed to arrive, citing the siege by land, air and sea as the preventive factor. The Executive Committee had therefore decided to hold discussions with the Aden-based faction while at the same time freezing its participation in the Assembly and to seek to clarify, by the time of the next Assembly, the status of each faction.

The President added that the IPU was furthermore considering a mission to Yemen and was likewise hopeful of pursuing dialogue between the two factions in the setting of Geneva. He also informed the Council that the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean had raised another situation in addition to those reviewed by the Executive Committee, namely that in Paraguay.

The Secretary General, elaborating on the issue, recalled media reports from the previous day that the Paraguayan Senate building had been set alight by groups protesting against a constitutional reform bill intended to enable the President to run for a second term. The situation was now apparently returning to calm but the recommendation was that the IPU issue a statement of solidarity with parliamentary institutions in the performance of their mandated functions and responsibilities by condemning all acts of violence against them and additionally encouraging the Paraguayan authorities to work in conformity with the Constitution.

The Governing Council took note of the information communicated to it in respect of the situation of the parliaments mentioned and approved the recommendations of the Executive Committee concerning those parliaments.

Item 5 of the agenda

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

(a) On his activities since the 199th session of the Governing Council
(CL/200/5(a)-R.1)

The President provided, with the aid of slides, a summary of the activities he had conducted since the previous session of the Governing Council, as fully described in his report on the subject (CL/200/5(a)-R.1).

(b) On the activities of the Executive Committee

The President said that most of the subjects addressed by the Executive Committee during the two days of intense and productive discussions it had thus far held in Dhaka, with one further meeting yet to take place, would be reported on under the relevant items of the agenda.

Recalling that the deadline for launching the process for the election of a new Secretary General fell on 1 April 2017, or 15 months before the end of the four-year term of the incumbent, he informed the Council that, at its sitting on 30 March, pursuant to the provisions of Articles 21(l) and 26.2(h) of the Statutes and Rule 3 of the Rules of the Secretariat, the Executive Committee had unanimously decided, on the basis of his satisfactory performance, to renew the mandate of the Secretary General for a second term of office, which was in keeping with normal practice. The matter would therefore be added to the agenda as Item 16, in respect of which the Council would be called upon at its next sitting to approve the appointment of the Secretary General for a second four-year term of office, starting on 1 July 2018 and ending on 30 June 2022, as recommended by the Executive Committee.

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

Item 6 of the agenda

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON THE
ACTIVITIES OF THE IPU IN 2016**

The Secretary General presented a summary of the activities carried out by the IPU in 2016, as detailed in the annual report available for downloading via the IPU website at: <https://beta.ipu.org/resources/publications/about-ipu/2017-03/annual-report-activities-inter-parliamentary-union-2016>.

Item 7 of the agenda

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

**(e) Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament
(11th Meeting of Women Speakers)
(CL/200/7(e)-R.1)**

A film depicting the proceedings of the Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament was screened.

Ms. A. Al-Qubaisi (United Arab Emirates), reporting with the aid of slides on the two-day Global Summit of Women Speakers co-organized in December 2016 by her country's Federal National Council and the IPU on the theme *United for shaping the future*, said that the debate among the many participants in attendance had focused on how the challenges posed by the geopolitical, socio-economic, environmental and technological megatrends affecting the future could be turned into opportunities for creating a better world. A roundtable discussion conducted by women Speakers had in turn informed the Abu Dhabi Declaration, annexed to document CL/200/7(e)-R.1, which had been adopted at the close of the Summit. She outlined the commitments articulated in the Declaration, as well as the priority areas identified therein for action by parliaments in addressing current and future challenges, including with IPU support; monitoring and reporting measures to be taken; and initiatives already being pursued by the Federal National Council. She added that further information on the Summit proceedings was available via the website www.gsww.ae and called on all parliamentarians, both women and men, to unite in forging a better future for the coming generations.

The President and the Secretary General accepted a trophy presented on behalf of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates in appreciation of the support and partnership provided to it by the IPU in connection with the holding of the Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament in Abu Dhabi.

The President expressed thanks to the Federal National Council for its outstanding organization of the Summit and affirmed that the Declaration formed the basis for a practical roadmap to be followed by all IPU Members.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM

The Secretary General announced that, in accordance with Rule 34.2 of the Rules of the Governing Council, the quorum of 69 was established for the current session on the basis of the participation of 136 Members or substitutes in the present first meeting of the Council.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.

Second sitting

Wednesday, 5 April 2017

The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m., with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), Mr. S. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), in the Chair.

At the proposal of the President, a minute of silence was observed in honour of the victims of the heinous chemical attack committed the previous day in the Syrian Arab Republic.

The President said that the IPU was deeply concerned by the horrific attack, which it condemned outright, together with all use of chemical weapons. The Executive Committee had been working consistently to find ways of adding value to the initiatives aimed at resolving the Syrian situation, which had provoked the worst humanitarian crisis in recent times. At its sitting of the previous day, it had agreed to establish a working group tasked with exploring measures to be undertaken by the global parliamentary community with a view to advancing an inclusive and comprehensive political solution to the situation. It was now working on the modalities for the group and looked forward to delivering a progress report at the Council's next session in October.

Item 11 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(a) Forum of Women Parliamentarians (CL/200/11(a)-R.1)

Ms. D. Moni Nawaz (Bangladesh), President of the 25th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the Forum's one-day meeting in Dhaka (CL/200/11(a)-R.1), said that participants had focused on strengthening the draft resolution *Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development*, with successful results, and had also discussed the topics of women's political participation and the empowerment of girls as a means to achieve sustainable development. For its part, the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians had recommended that the 5th anniversary of the IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments should be marked at the 137th Assembly by sharing experiences and best practices in a debate among women and men on gender-sensitive parliaments. Three new members had also been elected to the Bureau: Ms. J.A. Gakuba (Rwanda) for the African Group; Ms. R.W. Karirathna (Sri Lanka) for the Asia-Pacific Group; and Ms. K. Atshemyan (Armenia) for the Eurasia Group.

(b) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians (CL/200/11(b)-R.1 to R.3 and P.1 to P.5)

Ms. F. Koofi (Afghanistan), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, reporting on the activities of the Committee at its recent session in Dhaka, said that, during the current session, the Committee had held hearings with seven delegations and complainants. Such meetings were of great importance to the Committee's work; they allowed it to enhance its understanding of the cases before it, express its concerns, exchange views and foster constructive dialogue in order to reach satisfactory solutions that were in accordance with national and international human rights standards. She therefore thanked all the delegations and complainants for having taken the time to meet with the Committee.

At the current session, the Committee had on its agenda the cases of 140 members of parliament in 10 countries. Of those cases, 41 per cent concerned members of parliament from Asia, 41 per cent from Europe, 16 per cent from the Americas, 1 per cent from Africa and 1 per cent from the Middle East and North Africa. Twenty-five per cent of the cases concerned women members of parliament and 96 per cent concerned opposition members.

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

A slightly smaller number of draft decisions than was normally the case would be presented for the Council's consideration, as the Committee had had to shorten its session due to a lack of quorum on the first day of its deliberations. The draft decisions she would present concerned 76 parliamentarians in seven countries.

First, however, she wished to make reference to the cases in Turkey being examined by the Committee, which remained deeply preoccupied by the situation of the parliamentarians in that country. The situation of 56 parliamentarians of the People's Democratic Party (HDP) was particularly serious and had been deteriorating. The Committee therefore deeply regretted that, despite its efforts to organize a fact-finding mission to Turkey, its request had been turned down by the authorities. It reaffirmed its wish to conduct that mission and hoped that the mission could be organized rapidly.

AMERICAS

Venezuela

A Committee delegation had been due to travel to Venezuela two weeks earlier. Only days before the mission, the Committee had been told by the government party that the conditions were not in place for the mission to proceed. Moreover, one of the delegation's members had been refused a visa. The Committee regretted that situation, all the more so because it believed that the mission was more necessary than ever before and sincerely hoped, therefore, that it could still soon take place.

Until such time, the Committee expressed its deep concern about the continued suspension of four Venezuelan parliamentarians. The Supreme Court had ordered their suspension, in December 2015, following complaints about fraud in the most recent parliamentary elections. The Committee did not understand why the parliamentarians, whose election had been proclaimed by the National Electoral Council, should not be allowed to sit in parliament, as the fraud allegations were being looked into. Moreover, 16 months after the complaints were submitted, they had still not been dealt with. The Committee therefore seriously hoped that the Supreme Court would address this issue as a matter of urgency.

The National Assembly had refused to implement the Supreme Court's decision to suspend the four parliamentarians, with the result that the Supreme Court had declared all action by the National Assembly illegal. The Committee found that measure to be wholly disproportionate and was concerned that, as a consequence, the National Assembly and its members had not been receiving any funds since August 2016. The Committee urged the relevant authorities to address that situation forthwith.

The Committee was also concerned about other steps taken to restrict the work of parliamentarians. For instance, three opposition members of parliament had had their passports withdrawn recently in what seemed very much a reprisal for voicing criticism abroad about the political situation in Venezuela. The Committee urged the authorities to return the passports as a matter of urgency and to prevent such incidents from occurring.

The Committee recognized that the political crisis in Venezuela could only be solved through political dialogue. It therefore called on both sides to act in good faith and restart their talks. The IPU stood ready to assist, alongside the designated mediators, in bringing both sides together.

The President added that the Executive Committee had discussed at length the situation in Venezuela and had also received confirmation from representatives of the government party that the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians could proceed with its mission to the country, in which connection they had given assurances that all possible assistance would be extended in securing completion of the necessary visa formalities. That human rights mission was now expected to take place within the coming month, to be followed by a political mission. The Executive Committee had furthermore recommended that the Council endorse a statement it had prepared on the basis of its discussions of the situation, which was as follows:

The IPU endorses the concerns of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians on the cases before it of current and former parliamentarians from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The IPU expresses grave concern at the deteriorating political, economic and social situation in Venezuela. It expresses solidarity with the people of Venezuela and reiterates its commitment to defend parliamentary institutions wherever and whenever they come under assault. It calls on the executive, judicial and legislative authorities to remain within the limits of their respective purviews and thus respect the fundamental principle of the separation of powers. Any effort to usurp or replace the powers of one branch of the State from another undermines this well-established principle.

The IPU urges all sides to the crisis in Venezuela to give pride of place to dialogue as the sole means of resolving the current crisis and to ensure a speedy return to normalcy in the interest of the Venezuelan people. The IPU reiterates its offer to use its good offices to promote dialogue between the two sides and mediate the crisis in Venezuela.

The IPU calls for renewed efforts to ensure the establishment of strong and independent democratic institutions of State, which are at the heart of any vibrant and well-functioning democracy. It is appealing to all asides to put the interests of the country and the Venezuelan people before partisan interests.

The Governing Council endorsed the statement and unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the cases of 33 Venezuelan parliamentarians.

ASIA

Bangladesh

The cases in Bangladesh concerned the grenade attack of January 2005 that had killed Mr. Shah Ams Kibria, former Minister of Finance, and that of August 2004 against Ms. Sheikh Hasina, at the time member of parliament and leader of the opposition.

More than 12 years after the assassination of Mr. Shah Ams Kibria, the Committee remained deeply concerned that none of the perpetrators had been held accountable. It expressed similar concerns about the ongoing case of Ms. Sheikh Hasina.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decisions relating to the cases of Mr. Shah Ams Kibria and Ms. Sheikh Hasina.

Cambodia

In October 2016, the Council had expressed deep concern about the serious violations of human rights faced by 15 parliamentarians of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), the only opposition party represented in the Cambodian Parliament. It had concluded that they were being prevented from effectively playing their role as parliamentarians and members of the opposition freely and without fear of persecution. It had endorsed the Committee's recommendations following its mission to Cambodia in February 2016 and expressed the hope that significant progress would be made towards the resolution of the cases before the present meeting in Dhaka.

Regrettably, however, no progress had been made in that direction after two and a half years. The Committee had therefore come to the conclusion that there was a lack of political will on the part of the Cambodian authorities to resolve the cases. It was a conclusion that the Committee regretted but, given the seriousness of the current situation, it had a responsibility to alert the Council. It had spared no effort in promoting dialogue and solutions compliant with human rights standards.

The Committee was alarmed at the escalating harassment of the opposition members of parliament on the eve of local elections in Cambodia. Among many new recent developments of concern brought to its attention, the most worrying one was the prospect that the CNRP opposition party might be dissolved and not allowed to take part in the upcoming election following recent amendments made to the political party law.

The Committee believed that political dialogue was the only avenue for resolving the current crisis. It also considered that such dialogue could only be useful when there was sufficient space for dissent and for the peaceful exercise of the freedoms of expression,

association and peaceful assembly. It therefore once again called on the ruling party and the opposition urgently to resolve the cases at hand in strict compliance with human rights standards. Also considering that it was crucial for the CNRP to be able to stand in the upcoming elections, it encouraged the IPU to facilitate the political dialogue and to mediate in the crisis to that end. The Committee understood that the IPU President had also been invited to Cambodia to look into that possibility.

The President said that the Executive Committee had requested a hearing at the present Assembly with a politically balanced delegation from Cambodia but members of the delegation, citing time constraints, had declined the request. Ms. S. Tioulong, however, who was an opposition member of the Cambodian Parliament, had presented her views to the Executive Committee, calling on the IPU to urge the Cambodian authorities to consider the value of change-over of political power and the essential role of the opposition in any democracy.

The Secretary General added that he had subsequently learned from a member of the Cambodian delegation that there had been an unfortunate misunderstanding about the hearing scheduled with the Executive Committee and, moreover, that the Cambodian authorities, including those in parliament, were ready to welcome an IPU mission to Cambodia aimed at assessing the situation, including with respect to the cases under examination by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, and identifying possible means of IPU support for resolving the crisis.

Mr. S. Yang (Cambodia), asserting that the members of his delegation represented the Cambodian Senate and National Assembly and not any political party, rejected the draft decision, which he said was one-sided and overlooked the repeated explanations of the situation provided to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. The IPU had furthermore failed to act on the invitation extended for it to hold talks in Cambodia with the parliamentary authorities and other stakeholders, an invitation that remained open nonetheless. He asked where the IPU and the United Nations had been during the years of hell experienced by three million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979.

Mr. T. Nhem (Cambodia) agreed likewise that the draft decision was unacceptable on the ground that it did not take into account the views of the Cambodian authorities or the provisions of the recently adopted law governing all of the country's 66 political parties, without exception. All registered parties were eligible to participate in the forthcoming June elections, he said. As to the political dialogue within the country, it remained as ceaseless and ongoing as ever. Indeed, the ruling party continued to honour the culture of dialogue agreed between the two main parties holding seats in the National Assembly. He called on all delegations to desist from adopting the draft decision.

The President, stressing that any inadvertent silence or inaction on the part of the IPU could be rectified and did not set a precedent, expressed thanks for the invitation to the country, which he said had not been acted upon for logistical reasons only. The hope now was, however, that a visit would take place in the near future in order to investigate the truth about the alleged violation of the human rights of parliamentarians and the overall political situation. The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians engaged in important work as part of the system of checks and balances, but its findings were admittedly not always a source of comfort for governments. While it was heartening to learn that all parties could take part in elections, he wished to know whether Cambodian law prohibited the registration of a political party whose leader had been convicted on criminal charges.

Mr. T. Nhem (Cambodia) replied that, as in any country of the world, no Cambodian party headed by a convicted criminal was permitted to participate in elections.

Mr. S. Yang (Cambodia), further clarifying, said that convicted persons were barred from registering to vote, which in turn barred them from heading a political party.

Ms. F. Koofi (Afghanistan), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that her Committee had offered both the ruling and opposition parties the opportunity to present their views before it. She expressed the hope, however, that the proposed mission to Cambodia would further the political dialogue to enable the opposition parties to take part in the upcoming local elections and in the national elections scheduled for 2018.

Mr. M. Galea (Malta), recalling that the IPU had on previous occasions urged the ruling party in Cambodia to respect the rights of opposition parties and pursue dialogue, said that it must now take more drastic action if it were to retain its credibility. In short, it must send a strong message to the ruling party that its conduct was unacceptable.

The Governing Council adopted the draft decision relating to the cases of 15 Cambodian parliamentarians.

Malaysia

The Committee wished to present the long-standing case of former leader of the opposition, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, who had been sentenced, in February 2015, for a second time, on a charge of sodomy. He had been given a five year-prison term, which he was currently serving.

In December 2016, the Supreme Court had unfortunately closed the door to a judicial review of his sentence. The IPU trial observer had attended the Supreme Court deliberations on the matter and his report (CL/200/11(b)-R.3) was before the Council.

The Committee continued to believe that Mr. Anwar Ibrahim should not have been detained in the first place and that his trial had been deeply flawed. The Committee therefore called once more on the authorities to release Mr. Anwar Ibrahim immediately and to allow him to return to parliamentary life. Until that time, it would like to receive further assurances that he was indeed receiving the medical attention he required.

The Committee also wished to send a follow-up visit to Malaysia to help address the serious concerns and questions in the case of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, as well as the other cases of Malaysian parliamentarians that were before it. It therefore hoped that the authorities, as they had done in 2015, would fully cooperate in the organization of that visit.

Mr. K.S. Wee (Malaysia) expressed regret that the Committee should yet once more have repeated its unfounded comments concerning the case of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, given that the exhaustive and comprehensive due process conducted over so many years was now complete. Together with the judgement in the case, that process should be respected by all parties. Having been informed on inquiring that, as at the October session, the case was not to be presented and that there was consequently no need for a hearing with the Committee, his delegation was astonished by the unexpected reappearance of the case. It therefore had no option but to enter a reservation to the related draft decision.

The President said that the Committee's work plan did not necessarily provide for the examination of every one of its cases at each session, meaning that a case could indeed once more be presented to the Council following an absence. Noting the Committee's observations about the case of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, he asked whether Mr. Ibrahim was in fact receiving the medical attention he required.

Mr. K.S. Wee (Malaysia) confirmed that Mr. Ibrahim was receiving the medical treatment he needed, including, as he had requested, from specialist medical doctors from overseas, with the proviso that they must attend to him in Malaysia.

Ms. F. Koofi (Afghanistan), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Malaysian delegation had been informed that the case of Mr. Ibrahim would be examined by the Committee and presented to the Council for consideration at the present session. With over 300 cases before it, the Committee was unable to examine every one at each session and therefore prioritized its work on the basis of gravity and urgency. While the case of Mr. Ibrahim had indeed not been examined at the October session in 2016, information since provided to the Committee, including the report of the IPU trial observer, indicated that the Committee was justified in continuing to call for Mr. Ibrahim's immediate release.

The Governing Council adopted the draft decision relating to the case of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim.

Maldives

The Council had before it the report on the Committee's mission to the Maldives in October 2016 (CL/200/11(b)-R.2), in which she had participated and which had taken place with the full cooperation of the authorities. The Committee regretted that the Maldivian authorities had not submitted any observations on the report, nor the information they had undertaken to provide.

The mission report provided details on a variety of concerns such as the continued death threats against opposition members of parliament and the reduced space for freedom of expression and assembly and for the opposition to contribute meaningfully to the work of parliament. The Committee called on the authorities to do everything possible to address those concerns.

She mentioned the particular situation of Mr. Mahloof, who was serving a prison term following a conviction, the reasons for which the Committee found unconvincing. It had hoped that in the meantime the authorities would have allowed him to serve his sentence in the form of house arrest. Mr. Mahloof's sentence ran until June 2017. In the absence of any progress in the appeal process, the Committee now called on the authorities to release him immediately.

The Committee also remained concerned about the continued political polarization in the Maldives, as shown by the incidents during the recent vote on the motion of no-confidence in parliament. The Committee would look into those incidents and thanked the Deputy Speaker for making available video footage of what had happened that day in Parliament. At the same time, it renewed its call for all political parties to move beyond political expediency and partisanship. The Committee believed that they stood to gain much from using the IPU's good offices towards promoting effective dialogue inside and outside parliament.

The Secretary General reported that a letter on recent developments in the Maldives had been received from the Deputy Speaker of its Parliament after the Committee had concluded its work. The information would therefore be transmitted to the Committee for consideration at its next session. In the interim, the Deputy Speaker had already confirmed to him in Dhaka that he would consult with the relevant parties in the Maldives concerning the potential role that the IPU could again play in helping to promote the democratic process in that country.

The President said that he too had been contacted after the Committee had concluded its work by a member of the country's Jumhooree Party alleging erosion of the democratic process in the Maldives Parliament and violation of the human rights of parliamentarians. He would therefore likewise transmit the information provided to the Committee for consideration at its next session.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the cases of 33 parliamentarians of the Maldives.

Mongolia

In Mongolia, the Committee had been following the investigation into the assassination of Mr. Zorig Sanjasuuren since 1998. At the time of his assassination, Mr. Zorig was about to be appointed as Prime Minister. He was one of the founding fathers of democracy in Mongolia. The general feeling was that the assassination was a political crime and that it had deliberately been covered up. Until recently, investigations had been marked by almost 20 years of apparent inertia.

Since December 2016, proceedings had suddenly been rushed. It could have been good news. However, it was not. Trials had taken place behind closed doors. Suspects had been quickly sentenced to long prison terms. The court decisions had been kept secret. Allegations of torture and forced confessions had been levelled. Many of the Committee's questions remain unanswered to date, largely due to the persistent secrecy of the case.

Justice had not been done. The family of Mr. Zorig, but also the parliamentary authorities, shared the Committee's concerns. The Committee therefore urged the authorities of Mongolia, and particularly the Supreme Court, to remedy the serious deficiencies in the judicial process by ordering a public retrial in order to avoid any miscarriage of justice. It further reiterated its prior recommendations for the immediate declassification of the case and called for strict respect for international fair trial standards.

Lastly, the Committee wished to express support to the Parliament of Mongolia, as it was currently looking into new ways of exercising proactive oversight in the case. The Committee had decided to mandate a delegation to go back to Mongolia in order to facilitate progress in the case and to build on the renewed cooperation with the Parliament of Mongolia. It trusted that its decision would help to make progress in the right direction and hoped that justice would at last be done in this case.

The President said that he had met with the Speaker of the Mongolian Parliament in Dhaka, who was highly supportive of the work of the IPU, including the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, with which a member of the Mongolian delegation had subsequently interacted. The planned mission to Mongolia was indeed positive news.

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

Philippines

The Committee was presenting for the first time the case of Ms. Leila de Lima of the Philippines. Senator de Lima had been a staunch human rights defender, including as Chair of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights. At that time, she had been very critical of widely reported extrajudicial killings in Davao City when President Duterte was its mayor. After her election to the Senate in 2016, Senator de Lima had initiated a Senate inquiry into the killings of thousands of alleged drug users and drug dealers since President Duterte took office in June 2016. The Committee was concerned that, owing to her critical work, she had been replaced as chair of the Senate inquiry and had been subject to multiple threats and widespread intimidation. Her situation had seriously deteriorated in recent months in the light of accusations that she had received drug money to finance her senatorial campaign when she was Secretary of Justice. There were strong indications that those accusations, as well as Senator de Lima's recent arrest, had come in reprisal for her vocal criticism.

The Committee considered that it was crucial to go to the Philippines quickly to raise those concerns with the relevant authorities and to see Senator de Lima in detention. It was therefore pleased that the President of the Senate had said that he would lend his support to that Committee visit.

The Governing Council unanimously adopted the draft decision relating to the case of Ms. Leila de Lima.

Ms. F. Koofi (Afghanistan), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, added that parliaments and human rights were inextricably linked. When the rights of parliamentarians were violated, it was not only parliamentarians who were threatened but the parliamentary institution as a whole. Similarly, when the rights of a parliamentarian were violated in a country, the rights of parliamentarians around the world were weakened. That was why parliamentary solidarity was so important and underpinned the Committee's work.

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

Mr. A. Al Ahmad (Palestine) said it was regrettable that the presentations had not included the cases of the numerous Palestinian parliamentarians being held in prison or in administrative detention, without visiting rights, by the Israeli authorities. He expressed the hope that the Committee would consider the possibility of dispatching a mission to investigate the situation of those detainees and their conditions of detention.

Ms. F. Koofi (Afghanistan), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Committee had discussed in detail the cases before it involving Palestinian members of parliament, including those in administrative detention, at its meeting in January 2017. It remained concerned about their situation and was therefore indeed intending to carry out a fact-finding mission.

The President confirmed that the IPU was seized of the matter and that an update on the situation would be provided at the next Assembly in October.

Mr. S. Soendergaard (Denmark) expressed thanks to the Committee for its report and in particular for taking up the cases of the many fellow parliamentarians in Turkey, where thousands of human rights violations had reportedly occurred in 2016. He called on all Members to support the call of Danish parliamentarians for their Turkish colleagues to be released from prison. They must not be forgotten, he said.

The President said that he had encouraged the Turkish delegation attending the Assembly to work to facilitate the Committee's proposed mission to Turkey. The IPU would continue to allocate the necessary resources for enabling the Committee to continue its critical job ensuring the safety and security of parliamentarians, who were key defenders of human rights. Human rights violations, he added, were increasingly associated with political crisis and indeed were often its harbinger.

The rights of the parliamentary institution itself were also not immune from threat, as had been demonstrated by the recent attack on the Paraguayan Parliament, which the Executive Committee had discussed at length, ultimately formulating a presidential statement on the subject. The statement read as follows:

The IPU strongly condemns the recent attack on the National Congress of Paraguay. It has learned that following street protests over a controversial bill that may extend the limit on presidential terms, demonstrators set fire to the National Congress in the capital, Asunción, and ransacked the offices of the members of parliament who supported the bill.

It is saddened by the death of at least one opposition protestor and the injuries sustained by others, as well as by the extensive damage caused to the parliament building.

The IPU reiterates that the institution of parliament is a forum for peaceful debate and deplores any attack on parliament, which it considers to be an attack on democracy itself. The use of violence to express public discontent cannot be tolerated or justified under any circumstances. Disenchantment should be expressed through peaceful and lawful means only.

The IPU calls for a return to calm by protestors and restraint by the authorities in order to preserve peace and order in Paraguay. The Paraguayan authorities are urged to uphold the rule of law and make every effort to preserve the hard-won democracy in Paraguay that has been in place since 1992.

Turning to the election of two female members of the Committee to replace those whose terms of office ended at the current session, he drew attention to the candidatures of Ms. B. Jónsdóttir (Iceland), Ms. L. Dumont (France), Ms. B. Nhambu (Zimbabwe), Ms. M. Drame (Mali) and Ms. N.I. Anwar (Malaysia), whose particulars were set out, respectively, in documents CL/200/11(b)-P.1 to P.5.

The Secretary General, responding to a query from **Mr. J. Lacão (Portugal)** as to whether it was members of the Twelve Plus Group who should fill the vacancies created by its two outgoing members, said that Committee members were elected on the basis of the requirements stipulated in Rule 1.1 of the Rules and Practices of the Committee, which did not include a requirement to replace outgoing members with members from the same geopolitical group.

Mr. J. Lacão (Portugal) replied that, as he understood it from the Rules, the membership should be balanced among the geopolitical groups.

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia) stressed the principle of inclusivity, saying that members of all geopolitical groups must be given the opportunity to serve on the Committee.

Mr. N. Evans (United Kingdom) said that view was supported by Rule 1.3 of the Rules and Practices, which stated that the composition of the Committee should reflect an equitable geographical distribution of seats.

The Secretary General said that was correct, adding for clarification that, of the 10 seats on the Committee, three were currently held by the Twelve Plus Group, two by the African Group, two by the Asia-Pacific Group, two by the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) and one by the Arab Group.

Mr. P. Martin-Lalande (France) noted that the three seats held by the Twelve Plus Group amounted to almost one third of the total, which roughly mirrored the proportion of the Group, with its 48 members, in the IPU membership of 173. It was therefore entirely appropriate, he said, for the Group to hold those three seats.

Mr. J. Lacão (Portugal) said in response to a question posed by **a representative from Uruguay**, who agreed that outgoing members from one geopolitical group should not be replaced by members from another, said that the candidates for the Twelve Plus Group were those from France and Iceland.

Ms. M. Kiener Nellen (Switzerland), speaking as one of the outgoing members of the Committee and underscoring the importance of retaining French as one of the Committee's working languages, welcomed the candidature of Ms. Dumont, whom she commended as a highly competent colleague.

The President invited those candidates who were in the room to introduce themselves briefly to the Council in advance of the vote by roll-call that he said would be taken in order to select two of the five candidates.

Mr. P. Martin-Lalande (France), introducing the French candidate in her absence, said that Ms. Dumont was Vice-President of the French National Assembly and National Secretary for Human Rights. She was also a member of the National Consultative Human Rights Commission and had indeed for many years been involved in human rights issues at the international and national levels. She had furthermore prepared the emergency item debated at the IPU Assembly in Lusaka on giving an identity to the 230 millions of children without a civil status. Strongly committed to her parliamentary activities, she had been involved in drafting recent prison legislation in France and was now working to protect the human rights of persons deprived of liberty and address the problem of prison overcrowding, as well as matters relating to transgender prisoners.

Ms. B. Jónsdóttir (Iceland), in presenting her qualifications for membership, said that she stood ready to devote time and passion to the Committee, which performed an extremely important function, as she knew from personal experience as a parliamentarian whose own human rights case remained under its consideration. As someone who had always actively fought for social justice and for the rights of the vulnerable and abused, without fear of authority and irrespective of politics, she believed that she could be a useful member of the Committee.

Ms. B. Nhambu (Zimbabwe), in likewise presenting her qualifications, said that she had an interest in the human rights of parliamentarians and was a member of her Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Human Rights.

Following an explanation of the voting procedure, a vote was taken by roll-call, with the result that Ms. L. Dumont (France) and Ms. B. Jónsdóttir (Iceland), having obtained the two highest numbers of positive votes, were elected as members of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

Item 7 of the agenda
(continued)

REPORTS ON RECENT IPU SPECIALIZED MEETINGS

**(a) Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the
United Nations Climate Change Conference
(CL/200/7(a)-R.1)**

Mr. A. Touizi (Morocco), in presenting the report of the one-day parliamentary meeting held in Marrakech, in November 2016, on the occasion of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (CL/200/7(a)-R.1), drew attention to the outcome document annexed

thereto, listing the numerous instruments on which it expressed gratitude for all the support that he, as rapporteur of the meeting, had received in drafting the outcome document annexed to the report, which reflected the concerns of parliamentarians relating to climate change mitigation and adaptation, notably with respect to their role of drafting appropriate legislation.

(b) Regional seminar on *Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals through a human rights perspective* (for parliaments of the Pacific region)
(CL/200/7(b)-R.1)

Mr. L. Tuitubou (Fiji), reporting with the aid of slides on the three-day regional seminar co-organized in Fiji in November 2017 by his Parliament and the IPU, with United Nations support, said that, enriched by expert presentations, the discussions had led participants to identify the key areas on which parliaments in the region should focus in working to implement the SDGs through a human rights perspective. The outcome document annexed to the report of the seminar (CL/200/7(b)-R.1) set out the recommendations produced from those discussions, notable among them the importance of translating SDG-related provisions into domestic legislation, strengthening collaboration with the executive, and holding governments to account concerning the implementation of national sustainable development strategies.

(c) Parliamentary Forum at the Second High-level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation
(CL/200/7(c)-R.1)

Mr. D.E. Ethuro (Kenya), in presenting the report on the one-day Parliamentary Forum organized in Nairobi in November 2019 (CL/200/7(c)-R.1), explained the function of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GEPDC), of which the IPU was a founding member, as a body working to improve the quality and quantity of all flows of development cooperation. He drew attention to the Forum's concluding statement, annexed to the report, saying that it addressed the key issues discussed and sent an overarching message concerning the role of parliaments in the field of development cooperation. For its part, the IPU was set to increase its cooperation with other GEPDC stakeholders to support country-level implementation of the commitments articulated in the statement.

(d) Regional seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean, *Meeting the Sustainable Development Goals while reducing inequalities in and among countries: The role of parliaments*
(CL/200/7(d)-R.1)

The President referred Members to the report he had delivered at the Council's first sitting on his activities since the 199th session of the Governing Council (CL/200/5(a)-R.1), which provided details of the regional seminar.

**(e) Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament
(11th Meeting of Women Speakers)**
(CL/200/7(e)-R.1)

The President recalled that the report on the Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament (CL/200/7(e)-R.1) had been presented at the first sitting of the Council.

(f) Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations
(CL/200/7(f)-R.1)

Ms. J. Luveni (Fiji), introducing the report on the two-day annual Parliamentary Hearing held in New York in February 2017 on the theme *A world of blue: Preserving the oceans, safeguarding the planet, ensuring human well-being in the context of the 2030 Agenda* (CL/200/7(f)-R.1), said that the Hearing was among the series of IPU events and initiatives aimed at advancing implementation of the SDGs. The rich discussions conducted during its four main sessions had covered the most important aspects of the chosen theme, which was relevant to SDG 14, concerning oceans, and had identified the key

actions listed in the report that parliamentarians could take to protect the vital marine ecosystem. The conclusion had been that parliamentarians must work harder to generate political will in support of oceans, including through participation in the forthcoming Oceans Conference in June 2017.

(g) South Asian Speakers' Summit on implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
(CL/200/7(g)-R.1)

Mr. N.K. Premachandran (India) presented the report on the three-day South Asian Speakers' Summit held in India in February 2017 (CL/200/7(g)-R.1), saying that participants had focused their deliberations on the theme *Strengthening regional cooperation and resources for implementation of the SDGs* and had also evaluated follow-up to the Dhaka Declaration adopted at the previous Summit. Reports were delivered on national efforts to implement the SDGs, in which context terrorism was identified as a key obstacle, and the IPU President had given a presentation in addition to launching the IPU self-assessment toolkit for parliaments on the SDGs. Lastly, participants had adopted the Indore Declaration, the text of which was annexed to the report.

(h) Regional seminar for parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia on parliaments and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals
(CL/200/7(h)-R.1)

Ms. M. Bartos (Hungary), introducing the report of the two-day regional seminar hosted in Budapest by her Parliament in February 2017 (CL/200/7(h)-R.1), said that the event had focused on matters relating to water conservation and management in the context of climate change with the aim of disseminating useful information on the subject. She outlined the content of the discussions, which included the role of national parliaments in implementing the water-related SDG targets, and drew attention to the recommendations and conclusions set out in the outcome document annexed to the report. She encouraged Members to view the posters exhibited in the conference centre on the theme of promoting sustainability, which had been designed by young graphic design students participating in the seminar.

(i) Regional seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the parliaments of sub-Saharan Africa
(CL/200/7(i)-R.1)

Ms. R. Alitwala Kadaga (Uganda), presenting the report on the three-day regional seminar held in Kampala in March 2017 (CL/200/7(i)-R.1), said that the discussions among participants had focused on five topics: the role of parliaments in achieving the SDGs; effective governance as a critical element of sustainable development; health and well-being for all; climate change; and the mobilization of national resources identified for implementing the SDGs. The IPU self-assessment toolkit had also been launched during the seminar, which had concluded with the adoption of an outcome document setting out strategies, actions and recommendations for advancing parliamentary engagement with the SDGs in Africa.

(j) Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women
(CL/200/7(j)-R.1)

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia) said that the parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women had taken place in New York, in March 2017, on the theme *Empowering parliaments to empower women – Making the economy work for women*. As chairperson of the meeting, she had presented its conclusions at a plenary session of the Commission, which had brought a parliamentary perspective to the deliberations. Together with details of cross-cutting issues to be addressed, those conclusions were set out in the report of the meeting (CL/200/7(j)-R.1) and focused on the role of parliaments in helping to deliver gender equality in the economy, an aim that she called on all Members to pursue.

The President encouraged Members to circulate the reports in their own parliaments in order to raise awareness of IPU activities.

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

Item 8 of the agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IPU STRATEGY FOR 2017-2021

(CL/200/8-R.1)

The Secretary General drew attention to the report on activities undertaken to implement the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021 (CL/200/8-R.1), saying that it provided an overview of those activities, as well as information on future activities and next steps for IPU Members, in relation to each of the objectives identified in the Strategy. He commended the report to Members for action and follow-up.

The Governing Council took note of the report.

**(a) Project proposal on the establishment of a
Centre for Innovation in Parliament**

(CL/200/8(a)-P.1)

The Secretary General, with reference to the proposal set out in document CL/200/8(a)-P.1 to establish a Centre for Innovation in Parliament, recalled the initiatives undertaken over the years by the IPU to ensure that digital developments were reflected in parliamentary activities, saying that it now sought to build on those initiatives by institutionalizing its work in that sphere. The aim of the proposed Centre would be to explore how new technologies could best be harnessed in order to enhance parliamentary business processes. Parliaments could serve as regional or thematic hubs for the Centre, which would be funded from extrabudgetary resources.

Mr. P. Martin-Lalande (France) commended the IPU for its role in driving forward such useful initiatives as the World e-Parliament Conferences, the series of World e-Parliament Reports, and the interactive debates organized on the theme of parliaments in the digital era. Emphasizing that it was indeed important for parliaments to keep pace with the ongoing rapid developments in technology, including digital and media tools, he expressed firm support for the proposal.

The President additionally cited the newly-launched IPU TV and web application as further examples of how the IPU was embracing digital technology in its work.

The Governing Council approved the proposal to establish a Centre for Innovation in Parliament.

**(b) Discussion paper on the 20th anniversary of the
Universal Declaration on Democracy**

(CL/200/8(b)-P.1)

The Secretary General, recalling that 2017 marked the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration on Democracy and the 10th anniversary of the proclamation of 15 September as the International Day of Democracy by the United Nations General Assembly, drew attention to the suggestions contained in document CL/200/8(b)-P.1 for commemorating the two occasions. Those suggestions included the endorsement of a democracy pledge and the organization of relevant events at the national and IPU levels, including at the 137th Assembly in St. Petersburg, for which a draft resolution on the theme of democracy was being prepared for possible adoption. The IPU Secretariat would provide the necessary background materials to parliaments organizing national celebrations and would also partner with the United Nations in organizing high-profile events in New York and in Geneva, where it was hoped that former United States President Barack Obama might participate.

(c) Discussion paper on enhancing youth participation at the IPU
(CL/200/8(c)-P.1)

The Secretary General said that, notwithstanding the IPU's track record as a leader in promoting youth participation in political processes, steps were needed to further enhance the vibrant role of youth in IPU activities. The Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU had consequently proposed the measures set out in document CL/200/8(c)-P.1 for increasing the proportion of young parliamentarians in delegations to IPU Assemblies, including through various incentives, and for strengthening the youth contribution to IPU committees and working groups.

The President, highlighting the immense disconnect between the global demographic profile and women's representation in parliament, said that young women parliamentarians should receive special consideration in view of the gender-based discrimination to which they were liable in addition to age discrimination. For their part, national parliaments should give young women the opportunities they deserved.

The Governing Council took note of the discussion papers.

Item 9 of the agenda

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

(CL/200/9-R.1)

The Secretary General, presenting the checklist of activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations system from 15 September 2016 to 15 March 2017, as set out in document CL/200/9-R.1, said that those activities reflected the depth of IPU engagement with the United Nations, including at the country level, where parliamentary involvement in United Nations processes was a vital means of informing those processes. The activities were moreover fully consistent with the objectives and priorities identified in the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021, which indeed formed the basis for the IPU's interaction with the United Nations.

The President invited the Speaker of the Namibian National Assembly to report on the recent field visits organized for parliamentarians by the IPU, in conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), to two UNICEF-supported centres in Dhaka, one of which was involved in early childhood development and the other in adolescent development and participation.

Mr. P.H. Katjavivi (Namibia), reporting on the two visits, said that the early-learning centre offered activities aimed at developing the linguistic, social and cognitive skills of its pupils, while the centre for adolescents provided a forum where young girls and boys learned about their rights and discussed matters of concern to them, such as child marriage, reproductive health and drug abuse. The enriching visits had brought home the lesson that significant actions could be undertaken with few resources and that further efforts must be made to ensure equal opportunities for boys and girls, including by prioritizing the rights of the child. Such visits indeed gave added value to IPU Assemblies.

The Governing Council took note of the activities undertaken in cooperation with the United Nations system.

Item 10 of the agenda

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2016

(CL/200/10-R.1 to R.3 and P.1)

The President drew attention to the reports relating both to the financial results for 2016 and to financial questions, specifically the financial report and audited statements (CL/200/10-R.1), the Internal Auditors' report (CL/200/10-R.2), the report on the financial situation of the IPU at 31 January 2017 (CL/200/10-R.3) and the modalities for the functioning of the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund (CL/200/10-P.1).

Mr. R. del Picchia (France), a member of the Executive Committee and Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Finance, highlighting some of the financial and budgetary matters covered in those reports, said that the External Auditor had been satisfied with its findings, making no recommendations and expressing no reservations in its audit opinion. The year-end deficit of CHF 290,000 resulting from the agreed reduction in assessed contributions had been offset from the working capital fund, supplemented by a smaller contribution from the carbon offset reserves. For 2017, however, assessed contributions would rise by 1.5 per cent, while a ceiling of CHF 100,000 had been set for drawing from the Working Capital Fund. Investments had performed remarkably well in 2016, despite low interest rates, which had made it possible to reduce the operating deficit. The IPU's cash balance now stood at CHF 10.6 million and its financial investments at CHF 2.8 million, while voluntary contributions had risen to CHF 2.8 million. As to assessed contributions for 2017, some 40 per cent of the total due on 1 April had not been received. He therefore called on the parliaments concerned to make prompt payment.

Concerning the modalities for the functioning of the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund, he particularly welcomed the fact that the disbursement of grants was to fall under the authority of the Executive Committee, as had been recommended by the Sub-Committee on the grounds that decisions of a political nature should be taken collectively by a political body of the IPU. Other modalities developed at the suggestion of the Sub-Committee were that those grants should be targeted at parliaments in the poorest countries in general and not only at small island developing States (SIDS) in the Caribbean and South Pacific region; only parliaments paying the minimum assessed contribution should be eligible, excluding those in countries internationally recognized as tax havens or drug hubs; and the grant allocation, up to a maximum of CHF 20,000, should be used to facilitate the participation of a two-person delegation to the two annual IPU statutory Assemblies only and not for the payment of contributions or arrears in contributions.

Contrary to earlier agreement, however, that allocation of CHF 20,000 was not necessarily to be taken from the Working Capital Fund and repaid by voluntary contributions, as the Executive Committee was now to be authorized to deduct it annually from the regular budget so as to enable the Fund to continue functioning in years where no voluntary contributions were available for that purpose. In 2017, however, that would not be the case, as the Fund had already received a contribution of CHF 30,000. Other contributions would likewise be welcome.

In conclusion, he said that the Executive Committee recommended approval of the administrative and financial management of the IPU in 2016 and of the financial statements for 2016. Adding that the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund would be financed on approval of the next budget, he thanked the IPU Division of Support Services for its cooperation and transparency in providing access to information.

Mr. A. Gryffroy (Belgium), Internal Auditor, delivered the report he had prepared in conjunction with his fellow Internal Auditor, Ms. S. Moulengui-Mouélé (Gabon), as contained in document CL/200/10-R.2.

The President expressed appreciation to the British Group of the IPU for having made the first contribution to the Fund in the sum of CHF 30,000 and encouraged other Members to follow suit so as to assist in promoting the participation of non-member parliaments in the work of the IPU.

The Governing Council approved the financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2016, in addition to the modalities for the functioning of the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund.

Item 16 of the agenda

**APPOINTMENT OF A SECRETARY GENERAL FOR A PERIOD OF FOUR YEARS
(1 July 2018-30 June 2022)**

The President recalled the unanimous decision of the Executive Committee to recommend that the incumbent Secretary General, on the basis of his satisfactory performance, should be reappointed at the present juncture for a further four-year term of

office, from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2022, as was consistent with Articles 21(l) and 26.2(h) of the IPU Statutes and Rule 3 of the Rules of the Secretariat. He said he took it that the Council wished to approve the recommendation.

It was so agreed.

Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation), on behalf of the Eurasia Group, echoed by **Ms. D. Pascal Allende (Chile)**, on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, **Mr. A. Jasem Ahmed (United Arab Emirates)** on behalf of the Arab Group, **Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia)**, **Ms. R. Alitwala Kadaga (Uganda)**, and **Ms. R.J. Smith (Sierra Leone)** on behalf of the African Group and **delegates from Palestine, Suriname and Bangladesh**, welcomed the reappointment of the Secretary General, praising the tremendous contribution he had already made to the work of the IPU.

The President said that it had always been a pleasure and privilege to work with the Secretary General, whom he likewise congratulated on his reappointment, adding that it would ensure continuity in the work of the IPU when, at the end of his own term of office in October 2017, he handed over to the next incoming President.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

Third sitting

Wednesday, 5 April 2017

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

Item 11 of the agenda
(continued)

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(c) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/200/11(c)-R.1, P.1 and P.2)

Ms. D. Pascal Allende (Chile), President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, delivered the Committee's report of its recent meeting in Dhaka, as contained in document CL/200/11(c)-R.1. She also drew attention to the proposed agenda for the Committee's activities in 2017, which was detailed in the annex to the document and included the organization of a second roundtable on water and the establishment of a parliamentary network on water.

The President, recalling that three female members were to be elected to the Committee in accordance with the recent amendments to its Rules, said he took it that the Council wished to elect the two candidates whose details were set out in documents CL/200/11(c)-P.1 and P.2, namely Ms. S. Atallahjan (Canada) and Ms. R. Elwani (Egypt), in addition to Ms. N. Akter (Bangladesh), who had also been nominated for membership.

It was so decided.

(d) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/200/11(d)-R.1 and P.1)

Mr. P. Mahoux (Belgium), Member of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, presenting the report of the Committee's recent meeting in Dhaka (CL/200/11(d)-R.1), outlined the content of the discussions described in the report on the subject of refugee protection and statelessness, highlighting such challenges to affected groups as gender inequality and lack of access to health and education. He called on participants to join the *#IBelong* campaign established by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to support the Committee's recommendation that, during the 137th Assembly, the IPU should mark the important occasion of the 40th anniversary of the adoption of Protocols I and II Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

The President, recalling that the Council was set to elect one member from the Arab Group and another from the Eurasia Group as members of the Committee, said he took it that the Council wished to elect the one candidate whose nomination had been received to date, namely Mr. S.M. Al-Khathlan (Saudi Arabia) for the Arab Group, whose particulars were set out in document CL/200/11(d)-P.1.

It was so decided.

(e) Gender Partnership Group
(CL/200/11(e)-R.1)

Ms. G. Eldegard (Norway), Chairperson of the Gender Partnership Group, introducing the report on the Group's two meetings in Dhaka (CL/200/11(e)-R.1), expressed the hope that all Members would support the proposed amendment to the IPU Statutes, developed on the Group's initiative, which was intended to advance the goal of achieving gender equality within the IPU by increasing to one third the proportion of women members of the Executive

Committee. Welcoming the positive figures cited in the report for women's participation in the current Assembly and in their representation in parliaments, she urged Members to continue working to implement the IPU Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, including through use of the related self-assessment toolkit, and to share their experiences at the next Assembly during the debate planned to mark the 5th anniversary of the Plan. She thanked departing member Mr. A. Jasem Ahmed of the United Arab Emirates for his contribution to the Group's work, saying that he would remain a staunch ally in fulfilling the mission to achieve gender inclusivity, gender sensitivity and gender responsiveness in the IPU and its Member Parliaments alike.

The President pointed out that Mr. A. Abdel Aal (Egypt) would serve as a member of the Gender Partnership Group if his candidature for membership of the Executive Committee as a representative of the Arab Group was successful.

(f) Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
(CL/200/11(f)-R.1 and P.1)

Mr. Md. H. Millat (Bangladesh) delivered the Advisory Group's report of its recent meeting in Dhaka, as contained in document CL/200/11(f)-R.1.

The President, noting the Group's agreed change of name to the Advisory Group on Health, drew attention to document CL/200/11(f)-P.1, which concerned a proposal to revise the Group's mandate in line with the IPU Strategy 2017-2021. He said he took it that the Council wished to approve that proposal, which was reproduced in the annex to the document.

It was so decided.

(g) Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU
(CL/200/11(g)-R.1)

Ms. M. Osoru (Uganda), President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the recent one-day meeting of the Forum in Dhaka (CL/200/11(g)-R.1) and welcoming the record participation in the meeting, including by young women parliamentarians, highlighted the discussion by participants on means of redressing the inequalities that threatened to drive youth to violent extremism. She urged parliamentarians to play their part in working for inclusive societies by encouraging and supporting young people in their quest for civic partnership and political leadership, as well as by prioritizing oversight of government policies and resource allocations pertaining to women's empowerment. She thanked the Executive Committee for supporting the Forum's proposal for enhancing youth participation in IPU Assemblies and for recommending that the President of the Board of the Forum should be one of its ex officio members.

The President, drawing attention to the list of young parliamentarians named in the report as newly elected to serve a two-year term on the Board of the Forum, emphasized the importance of involving young parliamentarians in all IPU structures and indeed of engaging with young generations in local communities. In Dhaka, for instance, the views of young Bangladeshis on the theme of the General Debate had been sought and shared with the Forum, thereby providing input to the Assembly and additionally setting a valuable precedent for similar exercises in future.

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

Item 12 of the agenda

137th IPU ASSEMBLY (ST. PETERSBURG, 14-18 OCTOBER 2017)

The President recalled the minute of silence observed by participants in the Assembly as a mark of sympathy and solidarity with the Russian people following the recent terrorist attack in St. Petersburg and said that the preparations for holding the 137th Assembly in that city were progressing to plan.

Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation) expressed gratitude for the sympathy expressed to his people and said that their Parliament was greatly honoured to be hosting the next IPU Assembly at the Headquarters of the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States in the beautiful city of St. Petersburg, which was fully equipped for the purpose. As the nation's cultural capital, moreover, the city was home to a plethora of world-famous historical monuments and landmarks to be enjoyed. The Russian Federation looked forward to welcoming all IPU Members to the event, for which preparations were indeed well under way.

A short film highlighting the attractions of St. Petersburg was screened.

The President agreed that St. Petersburg held the promise of a perfect backdrop for the discussions of the Assembly and expressed the hope that all IPU Members would attend.

Item 13 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS
(CL/200/13-P.1)

(a) Statutory meetings

The Secretary General informed the Council that, following its initial consideration of an offer received from the Argentine Parliament to host the IPU Assembly in April 2019, the Executive Committee had tasked the Secretariat with conducting an assessment of the available facilities in Buenos Aires in order to ascertain their compliance with IPU requirements. Subject to the findings of the mission soon to be dispatched to Buenos Aires for that purpose, he hoped to be in a position to present a firm proposal on the matter at the Council's next session in October. He also encouraged potential hosts of future Assemblies to come forward, adding that Geneva would always serve as the venue in the event that no offers were received.

(b) Specialized meetings and other events

The Secretary General drew attention to the list of specialized and other meetings set out in document CL/200/13-P.1, some of which had already been approved by the Council. The remaining meetings for which Council approval was now sought were funded from external sources and thus had no implications for the IPU's core budget.

The Governing Council approved the list of specialized and other meetings.

Item 14 of the agenda

AMENDMENTS TO THE IPU STATUTES AND RULES
(CL/200/14-P.1, P.1.Am.1, P.2 and P.3)

The President drew attention to documents CL/200/14-P.1, P.1.Am.1, P.2 and P.3, which set out proposed amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules, some of which related to the Assembly and the Standing Committees and others to the gender composition of the Executive Committee and the Rules and Practices of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

The Secretary General, in outlining those amendments recommended by the Executive Committee for adoption, said that the proposed changes were aimed at: including the President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU as an ex officio member of the Executive Committee; ensuring that women comprised not less than one third of members elected to the Executive Committee; making the hosting of IPU Assemblies conditional on compliance with the IPU's agreed visa policy; providing a clear and unambiguous definition of what qualified as an "emergency" item; formalizing the practice of adopting an outcome document from the General Debate; extending the deadline for the submission of proposals on subject items to be discussed by Standing Committees; and adding a "statute of limitations" clause relating to the responsibility for arrears accumulated by predecessor parliaments. He also drew attention to the modality endorsed by the Executive Committee for implementation of the proposed amendment concerning the representation of women among its members, which was as described in document CL/200/14-P.2.

Mr. P. Martin-Lalande (France) suggested that, in languages such as French, the usual convention of placing masculine nouns before feminine should be reversed so that, for example, "la Présidente" preceded "le Président" in all texts.

The Secretary General, responding to requests for clarifications from **Mr. F. Imam (Bangladesh)** and **Mr. H.H. Vu (Viet Nam)**, said that the proposed amendment to Rule 4.1 of the Rules of the Assembly was intended to introduce some flexibility by allowing in future for either one of the two annual Assemblies to be held in Geneva, subject to the availability of venues. As to the responsibility for the financing of any second Assembly held outside Geneva within any one year, it continued to lie with the host Parliament concerned. With respect to the number of women members of the Executive Committee, the proportion of one third set by the proposed amendment to Rule 25.2 of the Statutes was intended as a minimum only and could therefore be legitimately exceeded.

The Governing Council approved the proposed amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules.

Item 15 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(CL/200/15-P.1)

(cf. Article 21(k) of the Statutes and Rules 37, 38 and 39 of the Rules of the Governing Council)

The President, referring to the candidature received for membership of the Executive Committee, said he took it that the Council would wish to elect Mr. A. Abdel Aal (Egypt) accordingly, in which case he would follow in the footsteps of his predecessor by also serving as a member of the Sub-Committee on Finance.

It was so decided.

Item 17 of the agenda

OTHER BUSINESS

The President, speaking of the situation in Yemen, said that both of the parliamentary factions claiming legitimacy in that country – the one based in Sana'a and the other in Aden - had been invited to participate in the Assembly but that only the Aden-based faction was in attendance. The Executive Committee had subsequently decided to freeze the participation of Yemen in the Assembly while at the same time taking the opportunity to engage with the faction present, in particular concerning the prospect of dialogue between the two factions. As a result, the Committee had proposed that the IPU should offer to host a meeting of the two for that purpose at its Headquarters in Geneva and that the IPU should accept the invitation received from the Aden-based faction for it to conduct an on-site assessment of its capabilities and functioning. He took it that the Council would wish to approve those proposals.

It was so agreed.

Mr. P. Nyabenda (Burundi) expressed appreciation to the IPU for its monitoring of the situation in Burundi and its ready offer of practical assistance in advancing the inter-Burundian dialogue taking place both inside and outside the country. Burundian parliamentarians hoped to be involved in the follow-up to that dialogue, notably in order to explain the outcome to their constituents and to transpose it into law.

The President said that the IPU was always careful to avoid any action that might duplicate or further complicate existing initiatives but that it indeed encouraged parliamentarians to play a role, where feasible, in adding value to such processes.

Following the customary exchange of courtesies, he declared closed the 200th session of the Governing Council.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.