113th ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 17 - 19.10.2005

SUBJECT ITEMS SUBMITTED BY IPU MEMBERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE STANDING COMMITTEES AT THE 115th ASSEMBLY, OCTOBER 2006

Please find below the list of subject items that have been submitted by IPU Members as of 30 September 2005. Any proposals received after this date will be distributed directly in the respective Standing Committees, and will also be available at the document distribution service at the 113th IPU Assembly, in Geneva.

Subject items and candidatures for co-rapporteurs should be sent to the IPU Secretariat at the latest **by 10 October 2005** so that it can draw up a consolidated document. This will allow the members of the geopolitical groups and of the standing committees to deal with this question and to consider possible proposals for subject items and candidatures for co-rapporteurs, for submission to the 113th Assembly at its closing session.

First Standing Committee
(Peace and International Security)

– The role of parliaments, governments and the media in combating incitement to hatred, racism and xenophobia in the audiovisual media, including the Internet[*][1]

(Belgium)

– Correcting the democracy deficit in the United Nations and promoting a rule-based multilateral system for establishing/achieving peace, stability and democracy[*]

(India)

– International cooperation between parliamentarians in drafting and coordinating national and international laws aimed at combating international terrorism

(Russian Federation)

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[*]   Please see annex for the explanatory note that accompanies this proposal.
[1]   The Belgian Group proposes this subject item for consideration by the First or Third Standing Committee.

Second Standing Committee
(Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade)

–   The need to simplify procedures of the world trade regime to achieve equitable trade*

(India)

–   The role of parliaments in the fight against poverty within the framework of Millennium Development Goals

(Russian Federation)

Third Standing Committee
(Democracy and Human Rights)

–   The burgeoning impact of childhood and adolescent obesity and type 2 diabetes*

(Australia)

–   The role of parliaments, governments and the media in combating incitement to hatred, racism and xenophobia in the audiovisual media, including the Internet*[1]

(Belgium)

–   Prevention of violence against children - The need for a global campaign*

(India)

–   Missing persons*

(Switzerland)

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*   Please see annex for the explanatory note that accompanies this proposal.
[1]   The Belgian Group proposes this subject item for consideration by the First or Third Standing Committee.

THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS, GOVERNMENTS AND THE MEDIA IN COMBATING INCITEMENT TO HATRED, RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA IN THE AUDIOVISUAL MEDIA, INCLUDING THE INTERNET

<u>Explanatory note submitted by Belgium</u>

Trust and dialogue between peoples from different civilizations are fundamentally fostered or hindered by the major audiovisual media broadcast beyond borders: the Internet and satellite television networks. Such media therefore are of strategic importance in lessening tensions and the resulting insecurity between ethnic and religious groups. Parliaments and governments must take steps to make it possible to combat incitement to hatred in the audiovisual media while safeguarding freedom of expression as a pillar of democracy.

CORRECTING THE DEMOCRACY DEFICIT IN THE UNITED NATIONS AND PROMOTING A RULE-BASED MULTILATERAL SYSTEM FOR ESTABLISHING/ACHIEVING PEACE, STABILITY AND DEMOCRACY

Explanatory note submitted by India

The twenty-first century is a century of global interdependence as well as a century of increased regional cooperation. We are living in an age when the world has become a global village, much smaller but more interdependent. In this integrated world, democratic principles have come to have a global dimension as the rules of global governance affect people's lives as much as national governance. Political, economic, social, technological and environmental issues have become multilateral in scope; simultaneously, there has also been an intensification of the levels of interaction within and between States and societies. The changing dimensions of international law, international organizations, the interests of transnational institutions and the emergence of international civil society have resulted in increased consultation, negotiation and cooperation among nations in arriving at decisions which have global manifestations.

The world today is beset with many problems of varying nature - social, political and economic. Some of these problems confronting humanity are of global dimensions which warrant collective and cooperative action by the comity of nations. To achieve peace, stability and democracy, it is imperative that we address the challenges before us in an effective and concerted manner, with consultation and cooperation permeating all our actions, and not through confrontation and tension. We also need to reinforce multilateralism in an increasingly interdependent world. In such a scenario, we need to assert the need for comprehensive reform of the United Nations system, which still reflects the world of 1945 and not the realities of the world of 2005. The structure and decision-making processes of the United Nations need to be reformed to reflect the world of the twenty-first century. Strong international institutions and a rule-based multilateral system are a must for the effective management of global interdependence. Regrettably, the United Nations is beset with a democracy deficit, which calls for comprehensive reforms, including the expansion of the Security Council, both in the permanent and non-permanent categories of membership. The United Nations has to be more representative of the world of today and more relevant to the challenges of the times. Only then can the United Nations pursue in a more effective manner the lofty ideals enshrined in the Charter and meet the challenges before the world in terms of achieving peace, stability and democracy.

**THE NEED TO SIMPLIFY PROCEDURES OF THE WORLD TRADE REGIME
TO ACHIEVE EQUITABLE TRADE**

<u>Explanatory note submitted by India</u>

The World Trade Organization, established in 1995, provides for a rule-based multilateral trade regime and now has about 150 members. Its membership accounts for over 90 per Cent of world trade. The world trade system under the WTO and its agreement and rules have facilitated a more liberalized trade regime and paved the way for growth in global trade volume. The rules provide for orderly trade, but certain problems remain unresolved from the perspective of the developing countries. Many rounds of WTO Ministerial Conferences have not yet resolved the issue of how to further simplify the rules so as to achieve equitable trade.

WTO rules need to be appropriately modified and simplified to provide for an equitable framework and trade regime. Trade has its multiplier effect on the economy as a whole, and is of vital importance for the developing countries, in respect of their income, employment and domestic industry etc. Therefore, an equitable trade regime is imperative to promote the interests of every country in a balanced manner and especially to avoid the marginalization of the developing and least developed countries in international trade. More simplified rules, taking into account the viewpoints of these countries and accommodating their concerns, are required to have equitable trade.

Considering the importance of trade for sustainable development, welfare and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals such as poverty elimination, it is essential that the IPU study and deliberate on the issue of the need to simplify the world trade regime in order to achieve equitable trade. Such IPU endeavours will help achieve greater consensus in this area among the Member Parliaments of the IPU and help to frame rules that are more equitable.

THE BURGEONING IMPACT OF CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENT OBESITY AND TYPE 2 DIABETES

Explanatory note submitted by Australia

In 2003 the World Health Organization proclaimed that diabetes had overtaken HIV/AIDS as the largest single cause of mortality worldwide, with over 3 million deaths attributed to diabetes and its complications.

Current estimates are that 5.1 per cent of the adult population (194 million in 2003) have diabetes, and this is increasing at the rate of 6 million per year (the estimate for 2025 is that the figure will reach 333 million, or 6.3 per cent of the adult population). While accurate data is not available for the prevalence of type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents, statistics do indicate a major rise in obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes in adolescents has been shown to be as difficult, if not more difficult, to control as type 1 diabetes. Research indicates that 30 per cent of type 2 diabetes cases in adolescents require insulin injections, lead to the same eye and kidney complications as type 1 diabetes and consume as many health care resources as type 1 diabetes.

Action is needed to alert the world community, parliaments and leaders of the impending health care disaster that awaits the world if measures are not taken now to address obesity and type 2 diabetes in children and adolescents.

PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN - THE NEED FOR A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN

Explanatory note submitted by India

Violence against children is widely prevalent in many countries in the world. Attempts to prevent violence against children have been inadequate and have failed in stopping the violence. Violence against children often does not receive the required attention from society and the authorities despite the fact that it occurs in every sphere of society and in various forms.

Children are least able to protect themselves against violence and to speak for themselves. Children in schools, orphanages, on the streets, in refugee camps and war zones, in detention, and in fields and in factories are abused and subjected to violence in every region of the world. In almost every aspect of their lives, children are subject to unconscionable violence, most often perpetrated by the very individuals charged with their safety and well-being. Street children are especially easy targets because they are poor, young, often ignorant of their rights, and lacking adults to whom they can turn for assistance. Child workers are exploited as well as tortured quite often.

The continuing plight of children needs to arouse our conscience, and the world community should not fail to take the measures necessary to ensure that the rights of children are legally protected, safeguarded and enforced and that violators of children's rights are restrained by the law and by other measures. We need a sustained global campaign to achieve this goal, in which international organizations and national governing institutions should participate. A more effective law is one requirement to end violence against children, as would be with other statutory mechanisms, such as the establishment of national commissions for children, to monitor child rights. We need to build an enabling social environment and social attitudes to protect children from violence and allow them to grow as healthy citizens. Violence against children not only leads to suffering among children; it also leads them to develop into undesirable personalities. Children who have been victims of violence often end up as socially unproductive citizens.

Violence against children is a social malady, it is against democratic principles and ethos, and the laws of nature. Every human being has the right to live and grow in humane conditions. Parliaments have to share the responsibility for taking initiatives in addressing the issue of violence against children holistically. Parliaments can create the necessary public opinion in this area, and can also enact the required legislation to protect the rights of children. Parliament also can keep a watch on the government activities for child welfare and protection of children's rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by nearly every country in the world, obliges governments to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence. Yet millions of children continue to suffer from violence and abuse. These acts of violence are often seen as lamentable, yet isolated incidents, rather than as a global phenomenon demanding a concerted international response.

It is imperative that the IPU examine and deliberate on the issue of violence against children to ensure that there is a more accelerated campaign to eliminate this cruelty, that is an affront to modern civilization. The IPU can play a key role in the campaign to end violence against children and in encouraging countries to make effective domestic efforts to end violence against children.

MISSING PERSONS

<u>Explanatory note submitted by Switzerland</u>

All over the world families are trying desperately to find their loved ones who have gone missing in conflicts or situations of armed violence. These families, in their intolerable uncertainty about the fate of a parent, a brother, a sister or a child, cannot mourn their losses and begin to rebuild their lives. Such wounds marginalize families, with all the consequences that this may have for society, and in the long term are an obstacle to peace and reconciliation.

Natural disasters and catastrophes too produce a very large number of missing persons. There too, the families of the victims live in anxiety and have difficulty finding some semblance of normalcy.

Parliaments, along with the executive branch of government, armed groups, leaders, national and international human rights organizations and organizations defending international humanitarian law, have a crucial role to play in preventing and resolving the problem of the missing. Parliamentarians should support or even establish national legislation to create an environment conducive to the prevention of this problem and to supporting families, in particular by promoting laws on personal identification, personal protection, the processing of information and cases related to the missing, and the handling of human remains and information on the deceased.

The Swiss delegation is convinced that a report and resolution on this subject adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union would raise awareness of the problem of the missing among state authorities.