



Assembly
Item 4

A/123/4-R
6 October 2010

REPORT OF THE IPU COMMITTEE ON UNITED NATIONS AFFAIRS

Rapporteur: Mr. C. Frolick (South Africa)

The Committee met from 4 to 6 October 2010. It began its first session with a briefing from the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, who presented the outcome of the recent United Nations Summit on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He devoted particular attention to the section entitled "The Way Forward", which identifies the steps still to be taken in order to achieve all the MDG targets. Gender equality, in particular, was considered to have the largest multiplier effect, and was an area where the IPU could make a significant difference. Moreover, the current financial crisis should not be seen as an excuse to avoid meeting international commitments related to the MDGs.

The leader of the delegation of Indonesia presented the IPU Report on the MDGs, tabled on the occasion of the 3rd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and subsequently circulated as a parliamentary contribution to the preparatory process of the MDG Summit. The Report detailed IPU work over the last decade to help advance the MDGs, galvanize political support, make the case for more and better development financing, and generally encourage action on the ground. It reviewed the relevant IPU policy statements and highlighted the organization's operational work in this domain. It also looked at how parliaments worked in support of the MDGs, on the basis of the initial findings of a study of seven parliaments.

The comparative study, which reviewed parliamentary mechanisms for the MDGs in seven countries (India, Indonesia, Italy, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and South Africa), was put to the Committee, eliciting comment from the delegation of Kenya and others exploring similar mechanisms. Several delegations recounted experiences and explained challenges in their work on the MDGs. Parliamentarians from both developed and developing countries expressed their commitment to continue to work towards achieving the MDGs by the target date of 2015. The UN Assistant Secretary-General thanked parliamentarians for their continued support, saying that the United Nations relied increasingly on legislators and the IPU as partners in the global partnership to meet the MDGs.

The Committee devoted its second session to the Brussels Programme of Action and preparations for the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC IV), scheduled for 2011. It heard presentations from the UN Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, the International Coordinator of LDC Watch and a member of parliament from the National Assembly of Malawi. The presentations addressed challenges and successes in LDCs, parliamentary involvement in LDC-related work and the priority areas to be included in the new programme of action for LDCs. The Deputy Speaker of the Assembly of the Republic of Portugal briefed participants on a recent UN meeting on enhancing the mobilization of financial resources for LDC development, which was particularly important at a time of financial crisis. The inclusion of concrete results within any future programme was encouraged.

In the ensuing roundtable discussion, participants and presenters underscored the importance of parliamentary involvement in the design, implementation and review of the programme of action for LDCs. Such involvement had been very modest to date. It was also stated that, in general, there had been little progress in many LDCs. Participants referred to the importance of good governance, institutional strengthening and fighting corruption to achieving the MDGs. They agreed that while the new programme should be broad in scope, it must also recognize the heterogeneous nature of the LDCs. Lastly, the participants requested more frequent reviews of programme implementation and suggested that future programmes include a reference to parliaments, thereby legitimizing their role in the programme.

It was the first time that parliaments were involved at such an early stage of establishing a programme for LDCs, and the opportunity should be seized. Parliaments were encouraged to take action well in advance of the Parliamentary Forum in May 2011 on the eve of LDC IV, identify and engage with authorities involved in the design of the new programme for the LDCs at the national level, and ensure parliamentary participation at regional and global preparatory meetings. The Committee heard examples of parliamentary engagement, including the example of an MDG constituency assessment in Bangladesh, a mechanism that might be replicated in the implementation of a future LDC programme of action. Parliaments should also develop cross-party positions to ensure that the priority issues on the national development agenda were taken up in future legislative mandates. The IPU and the United Nations confirmed their commitment to continue to support parliamentary engagement in a future programme.

In a separate session, the Committee reviewed cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations system over the past five years. It received the 2010 report of the UN Secretary-General on Cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU, and welcomed the growing, more substantive partnership between the two organizations. It discussed the text of the forthcoming UN General Assembly resolution on the issue (see proposed text in [Annex I](#)) and underscored the importance of all member parliaments engaging actively with their Foreign Ministries back home, with a view to garnering robust support among UN Member States.

Several delegations took the floor to underscore the evolving role of parliaments in international relations, and the fact that UN-IPU relations at the global level could play an important role in helping to further clarify relations between the legislature and the executive at the national level. That held true particularly in countries where parliaments as institutions were still in the process of building their capacities and establishing themselves as strong and effective players on the national scene. The general feeling was that there was scope for the United Nations and the IPU to forge a strategic partnership, and from that perspective, the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly provided an important opportunity.

The Committee discussed political challenges facing the UN Climate Change Conference (COP16/CMP6), to be held in Cancún from 29 November to 10 December 2010. The IPU and the Mexican Congress would be organizing a Parliamentary Meeting in the wings of the UN Conference with the support of UNDP on 6 December. The gathering was intended for legislators who were in attendance as members of official national delegations to COP16/CMP6.

The Committee felt that, in view of the poor results of COP15, urgent progress was needed to restore faith in the ability of the Parties to take the process forward. It was vital to secure a tangible outcome in Cancún, and parliamentarians bore their share of responsibility for the success of the event. Delegates underscored the importance of ensuring a strong parliamentary presence at COP16/CMP6 and thanked the IPU for taking the initiative to organize a side event.

The Committee was briefed on the format of the Parliamentary Meeting in Cancún by the Chairperson of the External Relations Committee of the Mexican Chamber of Deputies. The meeting was expected to adopt an outcome document which would be presented to the UN Conference. The Mexican Congress had prepared a preliminary draft which the IPU had sent to all Member Parliaments for their comments. In its final form, the document should be a succinct but powerful political declaration for both governments and parliaments.

At its last sitting, the Committee was briefed on the results of the Beijing +15 review which was presented in early 2010 at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. While progress is undeniable, gender equality, starting with the question of women's participation in politics and decision-making, has yet to be achieved. Important challenges need to be addressed which would require the active participation of parliaments. Issues of particular relevance to parliaments include: the need to improve enforcement of the existing legislative framework and oversight of gender policies, to review and amend discriminatory legislation and practices, to base policies on sex-disaggregated data and analysis, and - last but not least - to mainstream gender into the work of parliaments. The Committee urged all member parliaments to discuss follow-up to the Beijing commitments and to monitor progress in this regard.

The Committee also heard a presentation on the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women). It welcomed the establishment of this body and called on parliaments to support it and follow its work. The Committee also expressed the wish that a strong working relationship with the IPU be established especially in the areas of political empowerment of women, institutional gender mainstreaming, support to parliaments in promoting gender sensitive legislation, combating violence against women, and implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 and other relevant United Nations resolutions;

The Committee took note of the new composition of its Advisory Group ([Annex II](#)). Recalling the work undertaken by the Group in the past few years, in particular the field missions to examine the implementation of the One UN projects in Tanzania and Vietnam, the Group was encouraged to continue to explore modalities to best carry forward its mandate. Part of that discussion will continue during a new meeting of the Group on 1 December at UN Headquarters in New York, to be held back-to-back with the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations (2-3 December 2010).

DRAFT UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION

Sixty-Fifth Session General Assembly

Agenda Item 124 (m): Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and other organizations: Cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union

The General Assembly,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 2010,¹ which attests to the broad and substantive cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) over the past two years,

Taking note of the resolutions adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and circulated in the General Assembly and the many activities undertaken by the organization in support of the United Nations,

Taking note of the outcome of the Third World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and its Declaration on Securing Global Democratic Accountability for the Common Good, which reaffirms the commitment of national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to support the work of the United Nations and continue efforts to bridge the democracy gap in international relations,²

Taking note also of the findings and recommendations of the Report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union on how parliaments organize their work with the United Nations,³

Welcoming the annual parliamentary hearings at the United Nations as joint UN-IPU events during the General Assembly, as well as other specialized parliamentary meetings organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in cooperation with the United Nations in the context of major United Nations conferences and events,

Taking into consideration the Cooperation Agreement between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union of 1996,⁴ which laid the foundation for cooperation between the two organizations,

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration, as well as the 2005 World Summit Outcome, in which heads of State and Government resolved to strengthen further cooperation between the United Nations and national parliaments through their world organization, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, in all fields of the work of the United Nations, including the effective implementation of United Nations reform,

¹ A/65/382 – S/2010/490

² A/65/289.

³ A/65/289, annex.

⁴ A/51/402, annex.

Also recalling its resolution 57/32 of 19 November 2002, in which the Inter-Parliamentary Union was invited to participate in the work of the General Assembly in the capacity of observer, as well as resolutions 57/47 of 21 November 2002, 59/19 of 8 November 2004, 61/6 of 20 October 2006 and 63/24 of 18 November 2008,

Welcoming the close cooperation between the IPU and the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission in fostering political dialogue and building national capacities for good governance,

Welcoming the contribution of the IPU in shaping the agenda and work of the new Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) of ECOSOC,

Recognizing the importance of continued parliamentary support to the work of United Nations Human Rights Council,

Recognizing also the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in the areas of gender equality, political empowerment of women and combating violence against women, as well as the close and systematic cooperation between the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the relevant United Nations bodies, including the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),

Acknowledging the role and responsibility of national parliaments in the elaboration of national plans and strategies, as well as in ensuring greater transparency and accountability at the national and international levels,

1. *Welcomes* the efforts made by the Inter-Parliamentary Union to provide for a greater parliamentary contribution and enhanced support to the United Nations;
2. *Encourages* the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union to continue to cooperate closely in various fields, in particular peace and security, economic and social development, international law, human rights, and democracy and gender issues, bearing in mind the significant benefits of cooperation between the two organizations, to which the report of the Secretary-General attests;
3. *Encourages* the IPU to strengthen further its contribution to the work of the United Nations General Assembly, including its revitalization, and in relation to the process of United Nations reform and system-wide coherence;
4. *Invites* the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission to continue to work closely with the IPU in engaging national parliaments in the countries under consideration by the Commission in efforts to promote democratic governance, national dialogue and reconciliation;
5. *Encourages* the IPU to continue to work closely with the United Nations Development Cooperation Forum and bring a robust parliamentary contribution to the DCF process and the broader development cooperation agenda, including in the context of the current ECOSOC reform process;
6. *Encourages* the IPU to continue its efforts in mobilizing parliamentary support and action towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the target date of 2015;

7. Further *encourages* the IPU to strengthen its contribution to the United Nations human rights treaty body system and to the Human Rights Council, particularly as it relates to the Universal Periodic Review of the fulfilment of human rights obligations and commitments by UN member States;
8. *Invites* the new United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to work closely with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in areas that include the political empowerment of women, institutional gender mainstreaming, support to parliaments in promoting gender sensitive legislation, combating violence against women, and the implementation of relevant United Nations resolutions;
9. *Encourages* the IPU to further assist in developing closer cooperation between the United Nations and parliaments at the national level, including in terms of strengthening parliamentary capacities and helping to align national legislation with international commitments;
10. *Welcomes* the growing practice of including legislators as members of national delegations to major United Nations meetings and events, as appropriate, and invites member States to continue this practice in a more regular and systematic manner;
11. *Calls* for the further development of the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations as a joint UN-IPU event and for the circulation of the Hearing summary report as an official UN General Assembly document;
12. *Decides* to more systematically engage with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in organizing and integrating a parliamentary component and contribution to major United Nations review and deliberative processes;
13. *Welcomes* the proposal for a regular annual exchange between the Chief Executives Board for Coordination and the senior leadership of the IPU, with a view to building greater coherence in the work of the two organizations, maximizing parliamentary support for the United Nations, and helping to forge a strategic partnership between the two organizations;
14. *Decides*, in recognition of the unique role of national parliaments in support of the work of the United Nations, to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-sixth session a stand-alone item entitled "Interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union".

Composition
Advisory Group to the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs
October 2010

Mr. A. N. Atanasof (Argentina)	first term
Mr. Mostafa El Feki (Egypt)	second term
Mr. L. Fraga (Spain)	first term
Mr. C. Frolick (South Africa)	second term
Ms. Rosario Green (Mexico), President	second term
Ms. K. Komi (Finland)	first term
Ms. M. Lugaric (Croatia)	first term
Mr. M. Maia (Brazil)	first term
Mr. F. Naek (Pakistan)	second term
Ms. S. Sani (Nigeria)	first term
Mr. T. Toga (Ethiopia)	first term
Mr. M. Traore (Burkina Faso)	second term
Mr. N. Treacy (Ireland)	second term
Australia (name to be confirmed)	first term