

IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs
Item 2

UNC/2012/2-R.1
4 October 2012

**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION ON
MULTILATERALISM AND THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY**

(Monday, 22 October 2012, 2.30 – 5 p.m.)

Parliamentary diplomacy is a core component of multilateralism and international cooperation. Dialogue and cooperation among parliamentarians from different countries serve to build mutual understanding and greater confidence, and to garner political support for international action on a wide range of issues. As discussions on peace and security are held, new initiatives for parliamentary action at the international level are undertaken by various regional and other parliamentary assemblies and modalities for joint action identified.

The value of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting global peace is undeniable. More and more, the United Nations is turning to national parliaments and regional organizations to seek their support for processes relating to national reconciliation, peace-building and conflict prevention. General Assembly Resolution 65/123 calls upon the UN Peacebuilding Commission to work closely with the Inter-Parliamentary Union in engaging national parliaments in the countries under consideration by the Commission with a view to promoting democratic governance, national dialogue and reconciliation.

In addition, the landmark General Assembly Resolution 65/283 on Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution promises to serve as an important catalyst for parliamentary assemblies to make a greater contribution to international security. The Resolution stresses the importance of partnerships with and among regional and subregional organizations and encourages Member States, as appropriate, to resort to the mediation capacities of such organizations. In many cases, tensions and disputes that might escalate into outright conflict are already being discussed at parliamentary assemblies, and some of these have developed specific mechanisms that allow their members to become involved in the prevention and mediation of conflicts.

While the number of regional and other parliamentary organizations has been steadily increasing, together with the range of issues covered and level of participation by parliamentarians, the full potential and contribution of such parliamentary assemblies to the promotion of regional security and world peace remain largely untapped. For instance, the IPU and various regional assemblies currently interact with each other on a regular basis; however, this occurs more in the context of international meetings and less at the operational level. At the same time, assemblies vary in terms of their mandates and capacities, as well as their level of institutionalization.

This roundtable proposes to examine the strengths and weaknesses of current arrangements, the key challenges that arise from the wide range of roles and responsibilities attributed to various regional assemblies, options for enhancing cooperation and interaction, as well as the evolving role of parliamentary diplomacy in an ever more globalized and interdependent world.

Ultimately, with greater coherence and focus, parliamentary assemblies can serve as a vital link in international efforts to respond to the global challenges facing us all.

This topic will be addressed in a roundtable format bringing together representatives of regional and subregional parliamentary organizations. They will exchange ideas and experiences in the areas of national reconciliation, peace-building and conflict prevention. Participants will explore avenues for parliamentary mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes. Open seating will be available to other delegates auditing the session. The main ideas and recommendations emerging from this roundtable discussion will inform a parliamentary contribution to efforts currently under way by the United Nations to develop guidelines for political mediation in support of international peace and security.

Participating organizations include:

- Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
- East African Legislative Assembly
- Latin American Parliament
- OSCE Parliamentary Assembly
- Pan-African Parliament
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean
- Parliamentary Confederation of the Americas (COPA)
- Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC)
- Transitional Arab Parliament
- Parliamentarians for Global Action

Introductory Remarks:

- Mr. Mélégué Traoré, President, IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs

Moderator:

- Mr. Nigel Evans, Deputy Speaker, United Kingdom