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Committee on UN Affairs
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PROMOTING INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

9 October 2013 (9 a.m. - 1 p.m.)
Room A, CCV Annexe, CICG

Concept note

A strong democracy requires the participation of all sectors of society, including vulnerable groups such as indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. Taking into consideration their aspirations, involving them in all consultative and decision-making processes and tapping into their diverse potentials will lead to a vibrant, inclusive and open society.

The panel discussion will aim to take stock of measures that have been implemented, exchange good practices and explore the possibilities of further parliamentary involvement in meeting international commitments and promoting the rights of vulnerable groups. Based on the discussions, it is expected that concrete recommendations and action points will be identified and submitted for the consideration of the IPU Assembly.

Assisted by a moderator, the debate will be divided into two segments as follows:

Segment 1: Indigenous peoples

The UN General Assembly has convened a World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in New York in September 2014 in order to share perspectives and best practices on the implementation of the ground-breaking 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The IPU is encouraging parliaments to become involved in preparations for the World Conference and is keen to ensure that a parliamentary voice is heard in the discussions.

The rights enshrined in the UN Declaration need to be translated into public policies that are sensitive to the situation, needs and aspirations of this group, as well as supported by sufficient resources. This, in turn, requires the participation of indigenous peoples at all levels of government, and in particular in national and sub-national parliaments.

In recognition of the IPU's work on the rights of indigenous peoples, in May 2013 the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues invited the IPU "to organize meetings of parliamentarians at the global, regional and country levels to discuss the adoption of legislative and administrative measures affecting indigenous peoples and to encourage the participation of parliamentarians, including indigenous parliamentarians, in the World Conference and its preparatory processes (...)" .

The panel discussion will build on the outcome of the 2010 International Parliamentary Conference on Parliaments, minorities and indigenous peoples: Effective participation in politics, and in particular the Chiapas Declaration¹. It will bring together parliamentarians from countries with indigenous populations and other interested parliamentarians to share their experiences and efforts aimed at securing protection of the rights of indigenous peoples. The debate will be a starting point for the preparation of a parliamentary input to the World Conference in 2014.

Moderator:

Mr. Luis Gallegos, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva.

Presenters:

- Mr. Alexey Tsykarev, Member of the United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, OHCHR;
- Mr. Tau Henare, MP, New Zealand;
- Ms. Agripina Ramírez Nava, MP, Bolivia;
- Ms. Manon Schick, Director of the Swiss Section of Amnesty International.

Segment 2: Persons with disabilities

In their joint 2011 World Report on Disability, the World Bank and World Health Organization found that approximately 1 billion people worldwide live with a disability. Disability remains an unprecedented source of discrimination and exclusion in spite of international standards that are sanctioned, most notably, by the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. According to the Secretariat for the Convention, in the global South between 80 and 90 per cent of persons with disabilities of working age are unemployed,² and global losses arising from the un(der)employment of persons with disabilities stand between 3 and 7 per cent of gross domestic product according to International Labour Organization estimates.

Everyone, including persons with disabilities, should be entitled to appropriate facilities and support required to ensure their participation and inclusion in society, especially in all decision-making processes and starting with parliament. To this effect, in 2007 the IPU published a Handbook³ to help MPs understand the Convention and its legal ramifications at the national level. In 2008, the IPU developed a Policy⁴ on disability, which underscores the importance of ratifying and implementing the Convention and its Optional Protocol. The policy also makes the necessary arrangements within the IPU in line with the requirements of the Convention.

¹ See <http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/chiapas10.htm>

² See: www.un.org/disabilities/documents/toolaction/employmentfs.pdf

³ See <http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/disabilities-e.pdf>

⁴ Available at: <http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/183-disability.htm>. In March 2012 the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued the Thematic study on participation in political and public life by persons with disabilities.

The panel discussion will bring together parliamentarians and other stakeholders involved in promoting disability rights. They will have an opportunity to share experiences, take stock of progress made and formulate tangible recommendations for further parliamentary action. The discussion will also help contribute to follow-up of the outcome of the UN High-Level Meeting on Disability and Development, to be held just a couple of weeks earlier (23 September 2013).⁵

Moderator:

Mr. Luis Gallegos, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva.

Presenters:

- Ms. Hendrietta Bogopane, MP, Deputy Minister for Women, Children and Persons with Disability, South Africa;
- Mr. Mirko Tomassoni, MP, San Marino;
- Ms. Victoria Lee, International Disability Alliance (IDA).

⁵ www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1590