



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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136th Assembly

1. Inaugural ceremony

The inaugural ceremony took place on the South Plaza of the Bangladesh Parliament on Saturday 1 April 2017 at 7.30 p.m., with H.E. the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Ms. Sheikh Hasina, in attendance.

The national anthem of Bangladesh was performed and extracts from holy scriptures were recited. A short film was shown about the life of the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Mr. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Ms. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament, welcomed all participants and thanked those who had been involved in the organization of the 136th Assembly. She described some aspects of the geography, history, culture, cuisine and folklore of Dhaka and of Bangladesh. She hoped that delegates would be able to get to know more about some of those aspects of the country. She noted some of Bangladesh's achievements since it had gained independence, relating to increasing GDP, eradicating poverty, working towards gender parity, improving health outcomes, investing in technology and contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She underlined the importance of the Constitution, the rule of law and parliamentary democracy in Bangladesh.

It was important for parliamentarians to address the challenges currently facing the world, including globalization, the gap between the developed and developing countries and climate change. Part of addressing those challenges would involve engaging young people in democratic processes and ensuring that organizations such as the IPU continued to allow parliamentarians and others across the world to discuss, exchange good practices and develop shared visions. She called for the political language of those present to enable the building of an equitable, inclusive and peaceful world.

Mr. Miroslav Jenca, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, read out a message from the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. A. Guterres. As a former parliamentarian, Mr. Guterres attached great importance to maintaining close ties between the United Nations and the IPU. Legislators had the power to turn aspirations into action, and were crucial links between local and global affairs. He outlined his priorities as Secretary-General, which included improving living conditions through the SDGs, implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change and reforming the UN peace and security architecture so as to better serve the world's population. He welcomed the Assembly's focus on increasing social cohesion and reducing inequality, as the exclusion and hardship associated with inequality often led to cycles of insecurity and violence. He called for the creation of a more compassionate, inclusive and peaceful world.

Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, welcomed all those present and thanked everyone involved in the planning and running of the Assembly. He was humbled that his country was hosting such a well-attended IPU Assembly in his home town. The Assembly was the largest international event ever held in Bangladesh and would tackle some of the most pressing issues on the global parliamentary agenda. He evoked the successes of Bangladesh: it was making great strides in gender equality, was increasingly resilient to climate change, was trading successfully in textiles across the world, had lifted 50 million people out of poverty and was now self-sufficient in food.

Although globalization provided advantages, it had also created inequality that needed to be reduced if alternative, often extreme, world views were not to gain ground. During the Assembly, Members should debate candidly so as to find viable alternatives to the current model of wealth distribution. The solutions should draw on the advantages of democratic frameworks such as parliamentary diplomacy and good governance.

He recalled the IPU's central values of pluralism, diversity and inclusiveness, its strong cooperation with the United Nations, and its close involvement with many major decisions of the international community, including the adoption of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. He reaffirmed the IPU's commitment to a two-State solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, peace on Korean Peninsula, an end to the conflict in Syria, a solution to the crisis in Yemen and an end to the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. He also expressed the IPU's concern about news from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela that the powers of the legislature were in danger of being usurped.

The IPU was set to welcome two new Member Parliaments - from the Central African Republic and Tuvalu - which would bring IPU membership to a historic high of 173 national parliaments. Observer delegations from Brunei Darussalam, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and were also welcomed. The President invited all those present to see Bangladesh as their home and to come back again and again, and wished them a successful Assembly.

Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, expressed his wholehearted thanks to the Parliament, Government and people of Bangladesh for their generosity in hosting the 136th IPU Assembly. He outlined a number of issues that would take centre stage during the Assembly, particularly gender equality. Bangladesh was making significant progress in this area, from which other countries could learn a lot. People often assessed the benefits of hosting an IPU Assembly in economic and financial terms only. However, the cultural benefits and goodwill generated could not be overlooked. He looked forward to fruitful discussions about how parliamentarians could take action to improve people's well-being. The Assembly should recommend specific, actionable outcomes on how to tackle inequality of all types.

H.E. Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, said that her country was honoured to host the 136th Assembly. She described Bangladesh's journey since 1971 towards democracy, and stressed that democracy was the only means of ensuring prosperity and security. She outlined some of the efforts made to build a democratic and just society in Bangladesh, including by strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring an independent and vibrant media. She also noted the considerable socioeconomic progress that Bangladesh had achieved, including the fact that the poverty rate was almost 10 per cent lower than it had been in 2010, and that average life expectancy now stood at 72 years. She called for concerted action to tackle hunger and threats such as terrorism and climate change, and trusted that the Assembly's fruitful outcomes would be implemented at the national level.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina declared the 136th IPU Assembly open. To mark the occasion, the Prime Minister launched IPU TV and issued a set of commemorative postage stamps.

The speeches were followed by a light and sound show about the history of Bangladesh.

2. Election of the President

The first plenary sitting of the 136th IPU Assembly opened at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in the morning of Sunday 2 April, with the election of Ms. Shirin S. Chaudhury, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, as President of the Assembly.

3. Participation

Delegations from 126 Member Parliaments took part in the work of the Assembly¹:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Comoros, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Palestine, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The following six Associate Members also took part in the Assembly: the Arab Parliament, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), the Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS), the Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO), the Parliament of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

¹ For the complete list of IPU Members, see page 28

The Parliaments of Brunei Darussalam, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu participated as observers with a view to future affiliation.

Other observers comprised representatives of: (i) the United Nations system: the United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Women, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA); (ii) the International Monetary Fund (IMF); (iii) the League of Arab States; (iv) the African Parliamentary Union (APU), the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union (AIPU), the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Forum of Parliaments of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (FP-ICGLR), the Global Organization of Parliamentarians against Corruption (GOPAC), the Maghreb Consultative Council, Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and Russia, the Parliamentary Union of the OIC Member States (PUIC); (v) Liberal International, Socialist International; (vi) the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

Of the 1,206 delegates who attended the Assembly, 608 were members of parliament. Those parliamentarians included 42 Presiding Officers, 35 Deputy Presiding Officers and 192 women (31.6%).

4. Choice of an emergency item

On 2 April 2017, the President informed the Assembly that the following four requests for the inclusion of an emergency item had been proposed:

- *Tougher migration policies around the world and the risk of human rights violations (Mexico);*
- *The legalization of settlements by the Israeli Regulation Law: A violation of international law (Palestine, on behalf of the Arab Group);*
- *Urgent international action to save millions of people from famine and drought in parts of Africa and Yemen (Merged proposal - Belgium, Kenya and the United Kingdom);*
- *Preoccupation about recent events in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Argentina).*

The delegations of Belgium, Kenya and the United Kingdom had submitted individual proposals all dealing with the subject of famine in parts of Africa and Yemen and subsequently merged these proposals into the one mentioned above. The delegation of Argentina withdrew its proposal before the vote.

The Assembly proceeded with a roll-call vote on three items (see pages 39 to 41). The proposal put forward jointly by Belgium, Kenya and the United Kingdom was adopted and added to the agenda as Item 9.

5. Debates and decisions of the Assembly and its Standing Committees

- (a) General Debate on *Redressing inequalities: Delivering on dignity and well-being for all*
(Item 3)

High-level segment

Ms. S.S. Chaudhury (Bangladesh), in her capacity as President of the 136th Assembly, introduced the theme of the General Debate, *Redressing inequalities: Delivering on dignity and well-being for all*. She said that rising levels of inequality undermined human rights and opportunity for all. Increasing inequality had a direct impact on human well-being and was a precursor of economic, social and political instability. In 2015, the international community had agreed to respond and take decisive action on that front. In particular, SDG 10 called on States to "reduce inequalities within and among countries". She invited parliamentarians to discuss the impact of economic, social and political inequality on the poor, women and vulnerable groups in their countries. She also encouraged delegates to share their national experiences in tackling such inequalities and to describe specific policy proposals that had been considered to effectively address the problem, both within and among countries.

Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), President of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, provided a gender perspective on the overall theme of the General Debate. She underscored the issues that parliamentarians should prioritize as they sought to redress inequality at all levels: eliminating any

gender inequality that still prevailed in national legislation; enabling parliaments to meaningfully deliver on gender equality; and making economic equality a reality for all women. To deliver on dignity and well-being for all, it was imperative to respond to the needs of women in crisis situations, women migrants and refugees, women with disabilities, women living with HIV, and young and elderly women.

Mr. S. Al Remeithi (United Arab Emirates), President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, said that redressing inequality was of the utmost importance for young people, particularly since the impact of discrimination and persistent inequality had such a clear link to disillusionment and marginalization among young people. Discrimination and inequality also put them at risk of being attracted to extremism and violence. Young people must not be marginalized and must be prevented from becoming involved in violence and conflict. That could be done through education and employment, and through involving young people in politics and the activities of civil society.

Mr. K. Satyarthi, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and Honorary President of the Global March against Child Labour, addressed the Assembly as a keynote speaker. For over 25 years, he had been at the forefront of the global movement to end child slavery and exploitation. Mr. Satyarthi had helped liberate close to 85,000 children from exploitation and had developed a successful model for their education, rehabilitation and reintegration into mainstream society.

Using concrete examples from his work all over the world, he highlighted the dramatic plight of children, such as those working in cocoa bean fields, or the teenage mother he had met who had asked him to help her child, as it was too late for her. He called upon parliamentarians to use their power as representatives of the people to make a difference within the framework of the SDGs. He asked them on behalf of all children to return to their parliaments and prioritize the child-oriented goals. He said that reducing inequality could only begin by securing a better future for all children and making sure that no one was left behind.

A revolution began with small steps and he challenged parliamentarians to overcome their political and ideological differences and to unite in their compassion for children and to take determined action to ensure children's dignity and well-being. He introduced his *100 million* campaign which aimed to support the largest youth-to-youth mobilization in history to end the exploitation of over 100 million children. He encouraged parliamentarians to actively take part in the *Decision Makers Back to School Day* on 20 September 2017 - www.100million.org/parliamentarians - in order to listen to young people and learn what they, as parliamentarians, could do to change the lives of the world's most marginalized children, end child labour, ensure education for all and eradicate violence against children. The voices of young people around the world needed to be heard by those who represented them.

That message was later reinforced by Ms. G. Verburg, a former parliamentarian from the Netherlands, who was currently the Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and UN Assistant Secretary-General. She said that, with leadership from governments and support from organizations and individuals, the SUN Movement aimed to end malnutrition in all its forms and mobilize global action to ensure that every child, adolescent, mother and family could realize their right to food and nutrition, reach their full potential, and help shape sustainable and prosperous societies. Parliaments and parliamentarians were called upon to play a critical role in reaching those objectives. The IPU Secretary General had been actively involved in that campaign. It was made clear that parliaments should use their legislative and budgetary functions to enable countries to make the best possible investment in the future of their societies, namely investment in children's education, nutrition and health.

During the three days of deliberations, over 100 legislators from 88 national parliaments, including 29 Presiding Officers, as well as representatives of 11 partner organizations, contributed to the General Debate. The key messages and policy recommendations from the General Debate were reflected in the outcome document, the *Dhaka Communiqué* (see page 30).

The Assembly took place against the backdrop of dramatic events in other parts of the world. On 4 April, the Assembly observed a minute of silence in honour of the victims of the terrorist attack that had occurred in a metro station in St. Petersburg on the previous day. On 5 April, a minute of silence was observed in memory of the innocent victims of the atrocious chemical weapons attack in Syria. The IPU President reiterated the Organization's strong condemnation of all acts of terrorism and violent extremism, and called for the perpetrators of such acts to be brought to justice.

(b) Standing Committee on Peace and International Security

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security held four sittings from 2 to 4 April, with its President, Ms. L. Rojas (Mexico) in the chair. At its first sitting, the Committee considered an explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution entitled *The role of parliament in preventing outside interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States*, jointly drafted by the co-Rapporteurs Ms. S. Koutra-Koukouma (Cyprus) and Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation). It also considered 143 proposed amendments to the draft resolution submitted by 18 Member Parliaments. The first of those was an amendment to reject the entire resolution without considering the other amendments. That proposal was rejected by the Committee. Forty per cent of the proposed amendments and sub-amendments were approved. At its sitting on 4 April, the Committee adopted the revised text by a vote, with 44 in favour, 10 against and one abstention. The delegations of Canada, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Ukraine expressed their objection to the entire resolution during the explanation of votes. The delegation of Germany expressed its reservation to the entire resolution in writing.

The revised draft resolution, as endorsed by the Committee, was submitted to the Assembly, meeting in plenary, in the afternoon of 5 April, and was adopted by consensus. The title of the resolution was amended by the Assembly to *The role of parliament in respecting the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States*. Following adoption by the Assembly, the President of the Twelve Plus Group expressed the reservations of the delegations of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom to the entire resolution.

The Bureau met on 4 April to discuss the Committee's next subject item and programme of work. Three subject items submitted to the IPU Secretariat were discussed by the members of the Bureau. The Bureau decided to propose to the Committee the topic submitted by the delegation of Mexico entitled *Sustaining peace as a vehicle for achieving sustainable development*. The Committee endorsed the proposal, which was subsequently approved by the Assembly and which would be the subject of a resolution at the 138th Assembly.

The Bureau agreed to focus its work at the 137th Assembly on the following activities: an expert hearing on the theme chosen by the Committee for debate; a panel discussion on the role of parliament in monitoring the action of national armed forces participating in UN peacekeeping operations; and a panel discussion on implementation of a previous resolution on cyberwarfare (Hanoi, 2015).

(c) Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade held its sittings on 2, 3 and 4 April with its President, Ms. S. Tiouloung (Cambodia), in the chair. The Standing Committee had before it an explanatory memorandum and draft resolution, entitled *Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development*, jointly prepared by the co-Rapporteurs, Mr. N.K. Premachandran (India) and Ms. G. Cuevas (Mexico). It also had before it 82 amendments to the draft resolution submitted by 15 Member Parliaments, as well as amendments from the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.

The Committee first heard a presentation by Mr. A. Lopez-Claros of the World Bank. That was followed by a presentation of the draft resolution by the co-Rapporteurs and a debate. A total of 21 speakers took the floor. The Standing Committee then proceeded to consider the proposed amendments in two plenary sittings.

At its final sitting on 4 April, the Standing Committee unanimously adopted the consolidated draft to which no delegation had expressed a reservation. The Committee agreed that its President would present the draft resolution to the Assembly.

The draft resolution was submitted to the Assembly at its plenary sitting in the afternoon of 5 April and was adopted unanimously.

At its final sitting and at the proposal of the Bureau, the Standing Committee adopted its next subject item, *Engaging the private sector in implementing the SDGs, especially on renewable energy*. The Committee approved the nomination of Mr. A. Gryffroy (Belgium) as a co-Rapporteur and entrusted the IPU President with holding consultations to identify another co-Rapporteur.

In terms of the work plan for the 137th Assembly, the Committee approved the proposal of the Bureau to organize a debate on the subject item as well as a panel discussion on the theme *Achieving the highest attainable standards for health for all through science and research*. The Committee also agreed that a short segment should be organized to prepare for the Parliamentary Meeting at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Bonn in November 2017.

The Committee elected to the Bureau Ms. S. Dinică (Romania) to represent the Twelve Plus Group and Ms. W.B. Mustafa (Jordan) to represent the Arab Group. It decided to suspend Ms. C. Prado (Panama) and Mr. F. Musendu Flungu (Democratic Republic of the Congo) for failing to attend the previous two Bureau sessions without a valid reason.

(d) Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

The Committee held sittings on 3 and 4 April with its President, Ms. B. Tshireletso (Botswana), in the chair. At its first sitting, the Committee elected two new members to the Bureau: Mr. A. Niyongabo (Burundi) on behalf of the African Group and Mr. S. Spengemann (Canada) on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group. The Committee took note of the decision of the IPU President to nominate Mr. N. Schrijver (Netherlands) as a rapporteur for the Committee's next resolution. It further decided to nominate Ms. S. Dev (India) as a rapporteur, in order to ensure gender and youth balance. Mr. Schrijver and Ms. Dev would share this responsibility with Mr. I. Umakhanov (Russian Federation), who had been appointed rapporteur at the previous Assembly.

Also at its first sitting, the Committee held a preparatory debate on the theme of the next resolution, *Sharing our diversity: The 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy*. The IPU Secretary General recalled some of the key provisions of the Universal Declaration on Democracy, which the IPU had adopted in 1997. He said that core principles such as human rights, the rule of law and the equal participation of women and men remained fully relevant. Many things had changed since 1997: there had been an enormous expansion in digital technologies, and there was increasing concern about levels of public trust and youth participation in politics.

During the debate, 25 delegates shared their perspectives on the challenges and priorities for parliamentary action to strengthen democracy. They provided valuable input for the rapporteurs to draw upon as they drafted the text of the resolution.

The Committee President invited members to provide written input to the draft resolution by 30 April. She encouraged parliaments to use the International Day of Democracy on 15 September to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration and to engage citizens in more discussion and action to strengthen democracy.

At its second sitting, the Committee held an interactive debate entitled *Act now for adolescents: The role of parliamentarians in promoting adolescent health and well-being*. Participants included experts from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), civil society and the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

During the debate, it was noted that as many as one million adolescent girls and boys died every year. Hundreds of millions more developed unhealthy habits that would adversely affect their future health. For example, tobacco use often began during adolescence; and teenage girls might miss school because they did not have access to the sanitary products they needed during their menstrual periods.

During the conclusion of the debate, it was noted that parliamentary oversight was instrumental to ensuring that laws relating to adolescents were effectively implemented and that services reached those who were most in need. Parliamentarians should speak out about the needs and concerns of adolescent girls and boys, including lesbian and gay adolescents, so that they could get on the path to a healthy and happy adult life.

The Bureau of the Committee was unable to meet because only three out of its 18 members were present. On behalf of the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Mr. M.H. Millat (Bangladesh) handed over a document for the future consideration of the Bureau and Committee. The document was about review and follow-up action on the Committee's resolution, *Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children* (Kampala, 2012).

(e) Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

The Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs met on 4 April 2017. Three new members were elected to the Bureau: Mr. S. Gavrillov (Russian Federation); Ms. C. Crexell (Argentina); and Mr. A. Toumi (Morocco), who would finish the mandate of Ms. R. Benmassaoud (Morocco) as she was no longer a parliamentarian.

In the first session, the Committee discussed parliamentary follow-up of the SDGs in preparation for the 2017 session of the UN High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development. Panellists included: Mr. S. Mukerjee (Country Director, United Nations Development Programme, Bangladesh), Mr. M.F. Rabbi Miah (Bangladesh) and Ms. J. Luveni (Fiji). Mr. A. Avsan, President of the Standing Committee, was also a panellist.

The second session focused on the main theme of the 2017 HLPF, *Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*. Panellists included Mr. N. Kumar (Director, UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific); Ms. C. Hunter (UN Women, Bangladesh); Ms. B. Sampatisiri (Thailand); Ms. C. Roth (Germany); and Mr. S. Kinga (Bhutan).

During the discussions, it was suggested that priorities should be reoriented so as to take into account and measure happiness. It was important to ensure that the needs and interests of the most vulnerable sectors of society were considered and properly addressed. Efforts aimed at enhancing resilience were unlikely to succeed if 50 per cent of the population was not included in resilience analysis or planning.

On 3 April, four Bureau members - Mr. A. Avsan (Sweden), Mr. S. Chibeb (Algeria), Mr. D. Dawson (Canada) and Mr. A. Toumi (Morocco) - met members of the UN Country Team, led by the Resident Coordinator, Mr. R. Watkins. The UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. M. Jenca, also attended. The group reviewed the work of the UN development system in Bangladesh and the practical ways in which the UN Country Team interacted with the Government and Parliament of Bangladesh. The four members also visited two UNICEF schools, one for four-year-olds and one for teenagers. The visit built on previous IPU field missions aimed at examining how UN Country Teams were working with parliaments not merely as recipients of technical assistance but also as development partners in their own right. Much of the discussion revolved around UN Country Team work to support the implementation of the SDGs in Bangladesh – one of the 44 countries participating in the voluntary review at the 2017 edition of the HLPF.

(f) Debate on the emergency item

Urgent international action to save millions of people from famine and drought in parts of Africa and Yemen (Item 9)

The debate on the emergency item was held in the morning of Monday, 3 April 2017, with Mr. A.H. da Costa, (Timor-Leste), in the chair. A total of 15 speakers took the floor. Before the debate, Belgium, a co-author of the merged proposal, reiterated the urgent need to take action on climate change, one of the major causes of the famine, and the need to take coordinated action to stem the conflict occurring in some of the countries affected by the famine.

Participants were unanimous in reaffirming the urgent need to take immediate action on the deteriorating humanitarian situation in East Africa, the Horn of Africa, Nigeria and Yemen. They expressed their concern for and solidarity with millions of people who were facing the very real threat of starvation due to famine and drought, and dire circumstances of food insecurity.

Parliamentarians underscored the need for a better strategy to tackle the root causes of the famine, namely climate change and conflict, and insisted that famine must not be used as a weapon of war.

A delegate from South Sudan thanked the parliaments that had voted for the proposal. The conflict which had triggered the current famine had broken out in 2013. She recalled that people in South Sudan were in dire need of help: more than 40 per cent of South Sudan's 4.9 million people were in urgent need of food.

One delegate reiterated the need to promote democracy, adding that countries in a stable democracy were in a better position to deal with famine. Various delegations also recalled the important role parliaments and parliamentarians could play in the fight against the famine, and urged parliamentarians to step up pressure on their governments for their immediate action on the issue.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) stated that 20 million people were facing starvation and that half of the victims of famine were children under five years of age. Despite the urgent need for famine relief, only 15 per cent of the necessary funds for humanitarian aid had been received.

Several delegates underscored that more investment was needed for agriculture, irrigation, and support for the agricultural industry and for farmers so as to ensure stable food production. They urged parliaments to ensure that a sufficient percentage of the budget was allocated to agriculture. Several speakers also underscored that food waste should be avoided. One delegate quoted Mahatma Gandhi "The world has enough for everyone's need, but not enough for everyone's greed."

A delegate from the United Kingdom reminded participants that the world was facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations in 1945. He pointed out that UN figures related to four countries only (Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen) and that millions more were suffering from hunger elsewhere. He quoted the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs "... people will simply starve to death without collective and coordinated international efforts", and urged parliamentarians to bring pressure to bear on their respective governments to take immediate action to deal with the famine.

The Assembly referred the emergency item to a drafting committee made up of representatives of France, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria and the United Kingdom.

(g) Adoption of the resolution on the emergency item

In the afternoon of 4 April, the plenary sitting of the Assembly adopted the resolution by consensus. Following the adoption of the resolution, the delegation of India expressed its reservations on preambular paragraphs 5 and 6 and operative paragraphs 6 and 11.

6. Concluding sitting

In the afternoon of 5 April, the Assembly met for its concluding sitting. Mr. S. Kinga (Bhutan) provided an overview of the salient findings and recommendations of the General Debate, as reflected in the Dhaka Communiqué (see page 30). That outcome document of the General Debate on *Redressing inequalities: Delivering on dignity and well-being for all* was endorsed by the Assembly.

The resolution prepared by the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, *The role of parliament in respecting the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States*, was adopted by consensus. The resolution prepared by the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade, *Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development*, was adopted unanimously. The Presidents of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights and of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs presented the reports of their deliberations, which were noted by the Assembly.

The subject items to be taken up by the First and Second Standing Committees for the following one-year cycle were approved by the Assembly, as were the co-Rapporteurs for the respective subject items. The Assembly reconfirmed the amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules, as recommended by the Executive Committee and approved earlier by the Governing Council.

In their concluding remarks, the representatives of the geopolitical groups welcomed the substantive outcomes of the Assembly, as well as the warm hospitality and excellent organization provided by Bangladesh as host. Ms. R. Alitwala Kadaga (Uganda) on behalf of the African Group, Mr. R. El Abdi (Morocco) on behalf of the Arab Group, Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group, Ms. E. Mendoza Fernández (Bolivia) on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC), Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation) on behalf of the Eurasia Group and Mr. R.K. Singh (India) on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, all offered warm words of appreciation and congratulations for a highly successful IPU Assembly.

The IPU Secretary General expressed his gratitude to all Members of the IPU for their support and confidence, as evidenced by the unanimous decision of the Governing Council to entrust him with a second four-year term of office. He pledged that he and his team would do their utmost to take forward the decisions of the IPU Members and effectively implement the IPU's new Strategy. He also pledged to modernize the IPU, mobilize parliaments around the SDGs and challenges such as violent extremism and terrorism. He underscored the need for parliaments to be more inclusive in order to become more effective. Lastly, he thanked the IPU President and Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament for being such gracious hosts of the Assembly.

The IPU President underscored the importance of the IPU Assembly for Bangladesh and its people. The Assembly had been the largest international gathering ever held in his country. It had been an historic event that had lifted the nation, garnered the respect of the global community and provided renewed confidence and national pride. Bangladesh had shown that it was ready to do business with the world. The Assembly had also been a first for the IPU in many respects. It had been the first "green" IPU Assembly insofar as its carbon footprint had been calculated and would be offset by a series of environmentally friendly initiatives. Live coverage of the Assembly had been provided for the first time through IPU TV. It was the first time that women's representation in the Executive Committee had risen to one third. The participation of young MPs in the IPU's governing bodies had also been institutionalized. The presence of parliamentary leaders in Dhaka in such high numbers, despite the security concerns, had reconfirmed the victory of hope over fear and had taken parliamentary solidarity to a new height.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. S.S. Chaudhury, President of the Assembly and Speaker of the host Parliament, provided an overview of the key outcomes of what had undoubtedly been a very successful and substantive IPU Assembly. She expressed her appreciation for the active engagement of all delegations and called upon delegates and parliaments to actively follow up on the decisions and resolutions they had jointly adopted. Looking forward to the dialogue and cooperation ahead, she declared the 136th IPU Assembly closed.

200th session of the Governing Council

1. Membership of the IPU

At its sitting on 2 April, the Governing Council approved a request for reaffiliation from the Parliament of the Central African Republic and a request for affiliation from the Parliament of Tuvalu. The overall membership of the IPU was thus raised to 173 national parliaments and 11 Associate Members. High-level delegations from the parliaments of Brunei Darussalam, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu also attended as observers with a view to future affiliation.

The Council was apprised of the situation of certain parliaments and endorsed relevant recommendations adopted by the Executive Committee with regard to each of them. It decided to encourage all sides to dialogue in Burundi and reiterated the IPU's offer of its good offices to mediate the crisis, indicating that Geneva would be an ideal venue for talks. Regarding Cambodia, the Council urged the authorities to recognize the value of the political opposition and change-over of political power. The Council approved the decision to remove the Central African Republic from the list of countries to be closely monitored. It also decided to keep monitoring the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Libya, Thailand and Turkey. The Council expressed the hope that South Sudan would soon return to normalcy. It approved a proposal by the Executive Committee to set up a working group on Syria that could conduct on-site missions and hold meetings outside Assemblies. In connection with Yemen, a final determination would be made by the next session on the parliament's status within the IPU.

The Council condemned the attacks on the St. Petersburg metro on 3 April 2017 and expressed its solidarity with the Russian people. It also deplored the chemical attack in Syria. It endorsed an Executive Committee Statement on the situation in Venezuela and a Presidential Statement on the recent attacks on the Parliament of Paraguay.

2. Financial results for 2016

The Governing Council considered the Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements for 2016. The Financial Statements had been prepared in full compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and the accounts of the IPU and the closed Pension Fund were again consolidated into a single set of financial statements.

The financial results for 2016 were introduced by Mr. R. del Picchia (France), Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, who reported that the External Auditor had expressed to the Sub-Committee on Finance and in a written report his opinion that the financial statements were of high quality and the collaboration with the IPU finance team had been excellent. Although the IPU had recorded a reduction in its net assets of CHF 296,409, that was fully authorized within the 2016 budget. The performance of IPU investments had achieved a good return and voluntary contributions had increased.

The Internal Auditors' report was presented by Mr. A. Gryffroy (Belgium) on behalf of himself and Ms. S. Moulengui-Mouélé (Gabon). He conveyed their opinion that the accounts accurately portrayed the financial situation of the IPU at 31 December 2016 and complied with all current standards and rules. The External Auditor had expressed no reservations on the Financial Statements and had made no recommendations for improvements. The deficit for the year was within the amount authorized by the Governing Council in the 2016 budget.

The President noted that the IPU had received a clean bill of health from both the External and Internal Auditors and that the Organization's financial management was confirmed to be sound. With no questions from the floor, he commended the Secretary General and his team for the financial results. He also invited the Governing Council to adopt the modalities for the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund, designed to facilitate the participation of parliaments in the activities of the IPU, that had been introduced and described by Mr. del Picchia.

The Governing Council approved the Secretary General's financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2016, and adopted the Rules and Procedures of the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund (see page 53).

3. Financial situation

The Governing Council received an overview of the IPU's financial situation at 31 January 2017 and noted that the overall level of expenditure was on track at 99 per cent of the year-to-date budget. Arrears in assessed contributions amounted to CHF 619,000, with 34 Members having overdue accounts. Assessed contributions of CHF 6.3 million had already been paid for 2017, being 62 per cent of the total amount due.

4. Cooperation with the United Nations system

The Council took note of the usual checklist of activities conducted in cooperation with the United Nations since the previous Assembly held in October 2016 (see complete list on page 51). It noted in particular growing cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on preventing violent extremism as a means of countering terrorism. It took note that all activities carried out in cooperation with the United Nations were part and parcel of the IPU Strategy. With a new UN Secretary-General who was a former parliamentarian, it looked forward to further strengthening ties between the two organizations.

5. Implementation of the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021

The Council took note of a report on recent activities in implementation of the Strategy, as well as proposed activities under the new Strategy, in which peace and security – part of the IPU's core and original mandate - featured more prominently. It approved the proposal to establish a Centre for Innovation in Parliament funded by interested Members. It took note of suggestions to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the IPU's flagship Universal Declaration on Democracy and proposals to enhance youth participation in the IPU.

6. Recent specialized meetings

The Governing Council took note of the results of the Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the United Nations Climate Change Conference ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(a\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(a)-r1.pdf)); the Regional Seminar on Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals through a human rights perspective for Pacific Parliaments ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(b\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(b)-r1.pdf)); the Parliamentary Forum at the Second High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(c\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(c)-r1.pdf)); the Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Latin America and the Caribbean ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(d\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(d)-r1.pdf)); the Global Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(e\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(e)-r1.pdf)); the Annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(f\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(f)-r1.pdf)); the South Asian Speakers' Forum on implementation of the SDGs ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(g\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(g)-r1.pdf)); the Regional Seminar for Parliaments of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia on parliaments and implementation of the SDGs ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(h\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(h)-r1.pdf)); the Regional Seminar on the Sustainable Development Goals for the Parliaments of Sub-Saharan Africa ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(i\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(i)-r1.pdf)); and the Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women ([http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7\(j\)-r1.pdf](http://www.ipu.org/cnl-e/200/7(j)-r1.pdf)).

7. Reports of plenary bodies and specialized committees

At its sitting on 5 April, the Governing Council took note of the reports on the activities of the Committee on Middle East Questions; the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian; the Gender Partnership Group; the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, which decided to change its name to the Advisory Group on Health; the Forum of Women Parliamentarians; and the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU.

The Council also heard the report of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and approved eight decisions submitted by the latter (see pages 65 to 92), noting the reservations expressed by the delegations of Cambodia and Malaysia concerning the cases in their respective countries.

8. Future inter-parliamentary meetings

The Council was apprised of an invitation by the Parliament of Argentina to host an IPU Assembly in April 2019. It entrusted the Secretariat with conducting the usual on-site mission to ascertain that all the requirements for holding an Assembly were met. It approved proposals for a number of specialized meetings (see page 62 for the full list of future meetings).

9. Amendments to the Statutes and Rules

The Governing Council adopted amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules, specifically to the revised mandate of the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health and the Rules and Practices of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

The Council agreed that relevant editorial changes would also have to be made in the text of the IPU Statutes. Those would include the change of name of the Advisory Group on Health, as well as changes applicable only in the French version where the feminine form of nouns would precede the masculine form in the interest of gender equality.

10. Appointment of a Secretary General for a period of four years

At its sitting on 5 April, the Governing Council approved the unanimous recommendation by the Executive Committee to appoint the incumbent Secretary General for a second term of office starting on 1 July 2018 and ending on 30 June 2022. It did so on the basis of the incumbent's satisfactory performance and therefore decided not to initiate the formal procedure for elections. Rather, it invoked Rule 3 of the Secretariat which stipulates that the Executive Committee may propose to the Governing Council that it waive the procedure referred to above and reappoint the incumbent Secretary General.

275th session of the Executive Committee

1. Proceedings and decisions

The Executive Committee held its 275th session in Dhaka on 30 and 31 March and 4 April 2017. The President of the IPU chaired the meetings. The following members took part in the session: Ms. F. Benbadis (Algeria); Ms. M.I. Valente (Angola); Mr. A. Lins (Brazil) on 31 March; Ms. Y. Ferrer-Gómez (Cuba); Mr. R. del Picchia (France); Mr. K. Jalali (Islamic Republic of Iran); Mr. S. Suzuki (Japan), replaced by Mr. T. Fukui on 4 April; Mr. D.E. Ethuro (Kenya); Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia) in her capacity as President of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, Mr. N. Schrijver (Netherlands), Ms. G. Eldegard (Norway); Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation); Mr. A. Jasem Ahmed (United Arab Emirates), Mr. R. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom); and Mr. N. Van Giau (Viet Nam).

At its sitting on 30 March, the Executive Committee examined a request for reaffiliation from the Parliament of the Central African Republic and a request for affiliation from the Parliament of Tuvalu and recommended that the Council approve both.

The Executive Committee examined the situation of certain parliaments, and made specific recommendations to the Governing Council on the parliaments of Burundi, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Yemen. It decided to freeze the participation of Yemen at the current session and proposed to undertake an on-site mission later in the year to ascertain whether the parliament was functioning and if so, where. At its sitting on 4 April, it held hearings with an opposition member of the Cambodian delegation alone as the rest of the delegation had misunderstood the purpose of the hearing. The Executive Committee also held a hearing with the delegation of Venezuela to gain a better understanding of the overall political situation and recent developments. In a bid to achieve universal membership, it also examined a paper on retention of membership for parliaments in arrears, especially due to extenuating circumstances such as financial difficulties, conflict or natural disasters.

The Executive Committee heard the report of the Sub-Committee on Finance, which recommended that the Executive Committee approve the audit report and the Secretary General's financial administration for 2016, as well as the 2016 Financial Results. It examined the Financial Results, the External Auditor's Report and the Financial Situation.

In addition, the Executive Committee adopted the Rules and Procedures for the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund (PSF) designed to facilitate the participation of parliaments in the activities of the IPU. The PSF would disburse grants under the overall authority of the Executive Committee based on recommendations from the Sub-Committee on Finance. Grants would target only towards Members or potential Members who would be assessed at the minimum possible rate of IPU contributions, with countries considered to be tax havens excluded from eligibility. The Executive Committee thanked the UK Parliament for making the first-ever donation to the Fund in the amount of CHF 30,000.

In connection with the implementation of the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021, the Executive Committee examined a number of matters that were subsequently referred to the Governing Council, in particular approval of the establishment of a Centre for Parliamentary Innovation, proposals for commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy and proposals to boost youth participation in the IPU.

The Executive Committee was informed of staff developments. Mr. R. Farzam, an Afghan national, had been recruited as a Document Management Assistant at the G4 level and Ms. A. Blagojevic (Bosnia and Herzegovina) had been appointed to the newly-created post of Programme Manager for International Development at the P4 grade. Mr. R. Rodríguez Valencia, a Cuban national, had been recruited as an External Relations Officer at the P2 grade.

At its sitting on 31 March, the Executive Committee unanimously recommended that the Governing Council approve a second term of office for the Secretary General based on his satisfactory performance without having to proceed with a formal election as provided for in the Statutes and Rules. It decided to include that item in the agenda of the current session of the Governing Council for consideration as the Rules stipulated that the procedure for selecting the Secretary General should commence 15 months before the end of the term of the incumbent. The current Secretary General's term of office would end on 30 June 2018.

The Committee examined a number of amendments to the Statutes and Rules, including the introduction of a minimum quota of one third of members of either sex on the Executive Committee and the modalities for applying that quota. It also decided to expand its membership to the President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU as an ex officio member.

At its sitting on 4 April, the Executive Committee endorsed the proposal by the IPU President to issue a statement on the recent attack on the Parliament of Paraguay (see page 50) and decided to issue a statement on the situation in Venezuela (see page 49). The Committee endorsed the proposal to establish a working group on Syria composed of interested Executive Committee members and representatives of the six geopolitical groups. Following the attacks in the St. Petersburg metro, it expressed solidarity with the Russian people and condemned all terrorist acts. It also deplored the recent chemical attack in Syria.

The Committee was informed of an offer by Argentina to host an IPU Assembly in April 2019 in Buenos Aires. The Secretariat was entrusted with conducting the usual on-site assessment mission and reporting back to the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee elected the following six Vice-Presidents of the IPU: Mr. D.E. Ethuro (African Group); Mr. K. Jalali (Asia-Pacific Group); Mr. A. Abdel Aal (Arab Group), Mr. K. Kosachev (Eurasia Group); Ms. Y. Ferrer-Gómez (Group of Latin America and the Caribbean) and Mr. I. Liddell-Grainger (Twelve Plus Group). It also elected Mr. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom) as the Vice-President of the Executive Committee.

2. Sub-Committee on Finance

The Sub-Committee on Finance had met on 29 March to prepare and facilitate the Executive Committee's consideration of financial and budgetary matters. It had carefully examined all the financial documents and had been pleased to note that the IPU's accounts were again fully IPSAS-compliant. While net assets had decreased by CHF 296,409, the operational deficit had been fully met through the authorized use of reserves as foreseen in the 2016 budget. The investment performance was good.

The Sub-Committee had noted the stability and variety of voluntary contributions, which showed an increase of 1 per cent. It looked forward to preparations for the 2018 budget.

Forum and Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

The 25th session of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians took place on 1 April 2017. It brought together 132 delegates from 73 countries and representatives from various international organizations. The President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), opened the meeting. Ms. D. Moni, a Member of Parliament and Chair of the Standing Committee on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bangladesh) was elected President of the 25th session of the Forum. The Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, Ms. S.S. Chaudhury, and the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Mr. S. Chowdhury, delivered welcome addresses.

Ms. S. Atallahjan (Canada) summarized the work of the 38th and 39th meetings of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians. The rapporteur of the Gender Partnership Group, Ms. G. Eldegard (Norway), informed the participants about the work of the Group.

In order to contribute to the Assembly, participants considered, from a gender perspective, the draft resolution entitled *Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development* (Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade). Two groups were established, with each one considering a different aspect of the resolution. Ms. A. Habibou (Niger) and Ms. P. Locatelli (Italy) were appointed as chairpersons, and Ms. S. Atallahjan (Canada) and Ms. N. Al Kharoosi (Oman) were appointed as rapporteurs.

The two groups agreed that it was essential to create a favourable environment for the financial inclusion of women by ensuring equality before the law, especially in areas such as work, family, property and inheritance. They underscored the need to promote innovative financial services accessible to all women, including in rural areas, and that proper access to those services had to be linked to training, mentoring and financial education programmes.

The discussion gave rise to suggested amendments to the draft resolution before the Standing Committee, which subsequently included all of the proposed amendments in the draft resolution.

Follow-up to the IPU Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments

The meeting was opened with presentations from Mr. D.E. Ethuro (Kenya) and Ms. L. McInnen (United Kingdom). Participants exchanged their experiences of gender-sensitive reforms undertaken in parliament.

Following the discussions, the Forum and the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians recommended that an event involving men and women be organized at the 137th IPU Assembly to mark the 5th anniversary of the Plan of Action. Participants also recommended that a parity debate be held at every October Assembly.

Debate on women's political participation

During a debate on the 2017 IPU–UN Women *Map on Women in Politics* and the *Analysis of Women in Parliament 2016*, the Forum's participants reaffirmed their commitment to gender parity in parliament. They agreed to step up efforts to raise awareness, undertake legislative reform and support women candidates.

Empowering girls today to achieve sustainable development tomorrow

A meeting on empowering girls was opened with presentations from Mr. A. López Claros, Director of the World Bank Global Indicators Group, Ms. N. Luo, Member of Parliament and former Minister of Gender and Child Development (Zambia), Mr. I. Askew, Director of Reproductive Health and Research, World Health Organization (WHO) and Ms. S. Farisa Kabir, Head of the Human Rights and Legal Aid Services at the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) – a non-governmental organization based in Bangladesh.

Investment in the education and well-being of girls was key to achieving the SDGs by 2030. Protecting girls from violence and eliminating female genital mutilation were priorities that needed to be addressed urgently.

Subsidiary bodies of the Governing Council

1. Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

Ms. F. Koofi (Afghanistan), President, Mr. B. Fabritius (Germany), Vice-President, Mr. F. Pinedo (Argentina), Mr. A. Alaradi (Bahrain), Mr. A.B.M.F.K. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Mr. B. Mbuku Laka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Mr. A.A. Gueye (Senegal), Ms. M. Kiener Nellen (Switzerland) and Ms. D. Solórzano (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) took part in the Committee's 153rd session, which was held from 1 to 4 April 2017.

During the session, the Committee held seven hearings with delegations and complainants to enhance its understanding of the cases before it and convey its concerns. At this session, the Committee had on its agenda 25 cases concerning the situation of 140 members of parliament in 10 countries. Of the cases examined, 41 per cent involved parliamentarians from Asia with another 41 per cent from Europe, 16 per cent concerned parliamentarians from the Americas, 1 per cent concerned members of parliament 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. Freedom of expression being a matter of direct or indirect concern in most cases, the violations most frequently considered by the Committee during the session were lack of due process in proceedings against parliamentarians, abusive revocation or suspension of the parliamentary mandate, violation of freedom of assembly and association, and arbitrary arrest and detention.

The Committee submitted eight decisions to the Governing Council for adoption concerning the following countries: Bangladesh, Cambodia, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Philippines and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

2. Committee on Middle East Questions

The Committee held two sittings, on 1 and 3 April 2017. The Committee President, Ms. D. Pascal Allende (Chile), and members Ms. C. Guittet (France), Mr. A.N.M. Al-Ahmad (Palestine) and Mr. M. Al-Mehrzi (United Arab Emirates) attended both sittings.

Members of the Committee examined the current situation and expressed concern about the latest developments in the Middle East. The Committee noted in particular the Knesset's recent adoption of a piece of legislation known as the Regulation Law. The law posed a serious threat to a two-State solution and lasting peace. The Committee praised the IPU President and Secretary General for the IPU Statement that was issued on the Regulation Law and for their efforts to encourage its repeal in the interest of dialogue and peace.

It was recognized that unresolved conflicts in the region were one of the main drivers of violent extremism. Members encouraged the IPU to continue its work on the prevention of violent extremism.

The Committee endorsed its work plan for 2017 (see page 55). It recommitted itself to the roundtable approach as a means of building trust and dialogue through cooperation on technical issues, such as water management and renewable water technologies. The Secretary General was tasked with defining the modalities for implementing the planned initiatives. Members also underlined the importance of involving young parliamentarians in the work of the Committee.

Members of the Committee pledged to pursue consultations, facilitate dialogue and propose mechanisms for parliamentarians to support sustainable peace in the region. They recognized that it was in moments of tension that dialogue was most needed.

3. Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

The Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law met on Sunday 2 April. Representatives of the ICRC and UNHCR also attended.

Members of the Committee discussed the overall situation of refugees throughout the world and current challenges in ensuring their protection. It recommended that parliaments review current asylum systems in their respective countries with a view to enhancing them.

The Committee linked its discussions with the theme of the 136th IPU Assembly on redressing inequality. It would be important to ensure that national development plans and programmes, as well as social and economic policies, took account of the needs of refugees and stateless populations.

Information was provided about the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants. The Declaration had been the outcome of the high-level plenary meeting on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants. The IPU would need to follow the process and facilitate parliamentary involvement in the development and implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees, due to be held in 2018.

The Committee discussed follow-up to its mission to Lebanon, where it had assessed the refugee situation and its impact on the host country. It welcomed the international conference on Syria due to take place in Brussels in April 2017. Members were encouraged to support the call for assistance launched by the Lebanese Prime Minister, Mr. S. Hariri. The Committee also called on the Lebanese authorities to continue assisting Syrian refugees and protecting their rights and safety.

Members were informed of the latest work on the joint IPU-UNHCR handbook for parliamentarians, *Refugee protection and building state asylum systems*, to be launched at the 137th IPU Assembly.

The Committee reviewed the situation of the more than 10 million stateless people in the world today. It was briefed on recent developments in the UNHCR *#IBelong* campaign and the Global Plan of Action to End Statelessness, including 13 further accessions to the Statelessness Conventions and important reductions in existing stateless populations.

Recalling the outcome of the IPU-UNHCR global conference on statelessness held in South Africa in 2015, the Committee invited IPU Members to take a number of actions. They should advocate for the reduction or elimination of statelessness. National legislation should be reviewed to ensure its consistency with international standards on the prevention and reduction of statelessness. The Committee also discussed follow-up to the joint ICRC-IPU publication *International Humanitarian Law: Handbook for Parliamentarians No.25* (October 2016). Members encouraged parliaments to consider a number of actions. Interest should be generated for Handbook No. 25 through specifically designed events, possibly in partnership with the ICRC.

The 40th anniversary of the adoption of Protocols I and II additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions would be marked in 2017. Forty years previously, those Protocols had represented a milestone in the regulation of armed conflict by adapting humanitarian standards to the increasing number of non-international armed conflicts and wars of national liberation. The Committee recommended that the IPU mark that important anniversary during the 137th IPU Assembly in October 2017, either with a special debate or a declaration.

4. Gender Partnership Group

The Gender Partnership Group met on 31 March and 4 April 2017. Mr. D.E. Ethuro (Kenya), Ms. M. Mensah-Williams (Namibia), Mr. A.J. Ahmed (United Arab Emirates) and Ms. G. Eldegard (Norway) attended.

The Group monitored women's participation at the 136th IPU Assembly (see page 56 for the complete statistics). As at 4 April 2017, 31.6 per cent of delegates were women. That was the highest percentage recorded to date. The Group expressed its wish to see that trend continue.

Of the 126 delegations present at the Assembly, 114 had at least two delegates. Of those, 12 were all-male (10.5%). They were from the parliaments of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Japan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Monaco, the Philippines and Qatar. There was one all-female delegation (0.9%), from Iceland. The delegations from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Qatar were sanctioned at the Assembly for being exclusively represented by men three times or more consecutively.

There were 12 single-member delegations attending the Assembly. Of those, seven were made up of a male delegate and five of a female delegate. Three out of the seven single-member male delegations were sanctioned at the Assembly for being represented only by men three times or more consecutively.

The Group discussed the implementation of the IPU gender mainstreaming strategy. It welcomed efforts to better track the participation of women in the debates and panel discussions at IPU Assemblies. It also welcomed work to develop statistics on the participation of delegations by region. That would allow for better follow-up within the geopolitical groups. The Group was informed of the pledges that the IPU Secretary General had made as a Geneva Gender Champion to ensure that 40 per cent of the members of every IPU decision-making body were women.

The Group reviewed the situation of parliaments with no or few women members. It welcomed the decrease in the number of all-male parliamentary chambers. In September 2016, eight chambers had been all-male. On 1 March 2017, there had been four all-male parliamentary chambers: the unicameral parliaments of Micronesia, Qatar and Vanuatu, and the lower house of Yemen. It was important to

maintain dialogue with delegations from parliaments with no or few women members. Before the latest positive developments in Palau and Tonga, the Group had held several hearings with delegations from both those parliaments with a view to promoting awareness and commitment to advancing women's political participation.

The Group discussed how to renew commitment to implementing the IPU Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments, which had been adopted at the 127th IPU Assembly (Quebec City, October 2012). It was important to encourage parliaments to mark the five-year anniversary of the Plan of Action at the national level, to take stock of what progress had been made and to consider the challenges that remained. The Group called on the IPU Secretariat to use online tools and platforms to raise awareness of the issue. It welcomed the publication of the IPU self-assessment toolkit, *Evaluating the gender sensitivity of parliaments*, and commended those parliaments that had already undertaken assessments using the toolkit.

5. Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

The Advisory Group met on 1 April with seven out of ten members in attendance. Representatives of the WHO and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) also attended. The meeting was chaired by Mr. F. Ndugulile (United Republic of Tanzania), its President.

The Advisory Group discussed the findings from its field visit on 31 March, during which it had examined the health consequences of child marriage in Bangladesh. It formulated a number of recommendations, which it presented to the Governing Council.

The Group was impressed by the progress made to end child marriage in Bangladesh. Over the previous 10 years, the marriage rate for girls under 18 years of age had decreased from 67 per cent to 52 per cent. The Group noted that all stakeholders, ranging from government and parliament to civil society and local authorities, were strongly committed to working together. It urged them to continue to address the problem in a coordinated and effective manner.

The Advisory Group congratulated the Parliament of Bangladesh on the recent adoption of a law to end child marriage. However, it noted with concern that a clause of the law permitted child marriage under "special circumstances". The Group was encouraged to learn that the Bangladesh Government was drafting regulations to avoid that clause being misused. It welcomed that initiative and expressed the hope that strong regulations would be established with the active participation of NGOs and other relevant actors to minimize the scope for abuse of that clause.

The Advisory Group invited the Bangladesh Parliament to set up a robust system to regularly monitor implementation of the clause, related regulations and the law as a whole. It also encouraged Bangladeshi MPs to continue to address harmful cultural and social norms and practices that impacted or promoted child marriage in their constituencies. The Group urged them to pay particular attention to the most vulnerable girls and boys and their families. It expressed its readiness to support them in that work.

The Advisory Group agreed to revise its mandate to bring it in line with the IPU Strategy for 2017-2021 (see page 57). Its main areas of work would be women's, children's and adolescents' health, including HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Advisory Group would also pay attention to how universal health coverage, health security and emerging epidemics related to its core mandate. It agreed to rename itself the Advisory Group on Health.

The Advisory Group reviewed the 2012 IPU resolution on *Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children*. To align the resolution with the IPU Strategy, the SDGs and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health, the Group put forward a set of recommendations which would provide further guidance to the parliamentary community on the implementation of the 2012 resolution. The recommendations were submitted to the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights for endorsement.

6. Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU

The Forum met on Sunday 2 April 2017 with about 90 young parliamentarians in attendance, of whom 42 per cent were women. The average age of participants was 37.9 years. Compared to the previous Assembly held in October 2016, the number of young parliamentarians participating in the Assembly had risen. The percentage of young women attending had improved but the average age had increased. Members were encouraged to include the youngest members of their parliaments in delegations to IPU Assemblies.

New representatives were elected to the Board of the Forum for a two-year term (see page 25). Ms. M. Osoru (Uganda) was elected President of the Forum by the newly elected Board.

Delegates took stock of recent progress achieved and challenges encountered in their respective countries with regard to youth participation. They welcomed the support for the efforts spearheaded by the Forum of Young Parliamentarians to enhance youth participation at the IPU, as such efforts would have ripple effects in national parliaments. They welcomed recent amendments to the Statutes and Rules approved by the Executive Committee and endorsed by the Governing Council and the Assembly to have the President of the Forum serve as an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee. They further welcomed the proposal to request all delegations to IPU Assemblies to include at least one young female or male member under 45 years of age by 2020.

The young parliamentarians discussed their contributions to the business of the 136th Assembly, focusing on means of securing youth inclusion, not only in education, employment, civic participation and political leadership, but also in community life, sports and arts. Persistent inequalities in basic rights, such as the right to education and to health, were priorities to be addressed.

They discussed future IPU meetings for young parliamentarians: a regional meeting of young parliamentarians of the Asia-Pacific region to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 25 and 26 April 2017; a regional meeting of young parliamentarians in Africa to be held in Abuja, Nigeria, in July 2017; and the Fourth IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians to be held in Ottawa, Canada, in November 2017.

Participants stressed that the future draft resolution to be debated at the 137th Assembly, *Sharing our diversity: The 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy*, had to be strong on youth participation. Mr. N. Erskine-Smith (Canada) would provide the co-Rapporteurs of the draft resolution with a youth overview report in the form of a written contribution on behalf of the Forum.

The participants were informed of the 19th World Festival of Youth and Students to be held in Sochi, Russian Federation. As the Festival was taking place in October 2017, the young parliamentarians attending the 137th Assembly were encouraged by the host to stay a few more days in Russia and attend the Festival.

Other events

1. Joint Meeting of Chairpersons of Geopolitical Groups and Presidents of the Standing Committees

In the morning of 1 April, the IPU President and Secretary General met with the Chairpersons of the Geopolitical Groups and the Presidents of the Standing Committees to discuss the question of representation and participation in the IPU, preparations for the International Day of Democracy, as well as modalities to strengthen reporting by Members on follow-up of IPU resolutions and decisions.

The IPU President and Secretary General referred to the decision of the IPU governing bodies to increase the representation of women on the IPU Executive Committee to one third of the elected members. The modalities for implementation of that decision, as proposed by the Gender Partnership Group, had been approved by the Executive Committee. The Chairpersons of the Geopolitical Groups expressed their full support for implementing the decision and ensuring gender equality in the work of the IPU. All geopolitical groups were keen for more young MPs to participate in national delegations and in debates at IPU Assemblies. The Groups would discuss practical modalities to enhance youth participation, with a view to preparing concrete recommendations for adoption at the 137th Assembly.

Preparations for the 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy and the 10th anniversary of the International Day of Democracy (15 September) were discussed. The Secretary General provided an overview of planned activities, including a campaign to endorse a democracy pledge, background materials and brochures for use by and in parliaments, events in Geneva and New York, the adoption of a resolution at the 137th Assembly, and a specific communications strategy. He encouraged all geopolitical groups and Members to engage in that event, noting that the role and responsibilities of parliaments in safeguarding and promoting the core principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law were more important now than ever before with democracy under attack in so many places in the world. The Chairpersons of the Geopolitical Groups undertook to raise awareness among their respective members.

The Director of the Division for Member Parliaments and External Relations at the IPU recalled the various modalities used over the years to ensure the statutory reporting on follow-up of IPU resolutions and other decisions. She invited the Chairpersons of the Geopolitical Groups and the Presidents of the Standing Committees to consider new modalities under which all Members would be required to submit reports every few years and not annually, as had been the case previously. Measures would also be taken to ensure greater visibility for national reports in the IPU governing bodies. While modalities were being formulated, the Groups would be invited to help identify a limited number of “volunteers” to prepare the 2017 reports. The Chairpersons welcomed that new approach. They underscored the importance of improving the reporting exercise, of providing additional time and of increasing predictability to enable Members to plan well in advance. They would discuss the matter in their respective Groups, gather any suggestions and forward their recommendations to the IPU Secretariat.

The President expressed the wish to further strengthen cooperation and interaction between the IPU and the geopolitical groups, to go well beyond the regular programme of work during IPU Assemblies. The Groups could play a much more prominent role, for example, in enhancing interaction between UN country teams and national parliaments, and in bringing good practices to the attention of the broader IPU membership. The Chairs of the Groups expressed their support for the reappointment of the IPU Secretary General for a second term, as recommended by the Executive Committee, and looked forward to productive engagement with the IPU Secretariat in the years ahead. As the IPU was playing an increasingly prominent role in fostering political dialogue between political factions within countries, the geopolitical groups could also assist in early warning and in obtaining relevant information. All participants recognized the value of the joint meetings and expressed their interest in strengthening cooperation.

2. Interactive debate on *Parliamentarians and social networks: Making effective use of social media*

The debate was part of a series under the heading *Parliaments in the digital era*. The series was aimed at addressing how parliaments were adapting their work to the opportunities presented and challenges posed by digital technologies. The debate was moderated by Mr. P. Martin-Lalande (France) and allowed parliamentarians from 15 countries to share their experiences and lessons learned.

Numerous advantages were cited, including the possibility of direct access to large numbers of people. For many young people, social media was their main or only channel of information, so that parliamentarians had no choice but to use such means to reach them. Parliamentarians could use social media to show the reality of their daily work, demonstrate that they were “normal” people, and so break down the barriers that might exist between citizens and their representatives.

To be successful, however, it was necessary to be fully convinced and a “true believer” in the need both to interact constantly with citizens and to be ready to respond to their questions and challenges. That required very good judgment, as parliamentarians’ rapid reactions to new events would be available online forever. While dealing with criticism was a normal part of a politician’s life, parliamentarians must insist that it was not acceptable to be vulgar or inappropriate online. Investment was required in the skills needed to identify fake news or fake profiles online. Parliamentarians must be attentive to protecting their privacy. Those points held true for public figures, but more generally for all users of social media and online communication tools.

Parliamentarians described how the information they gathered and their interactions on social media made a direct contribution to their work in parliament. A member from Italy shared an experience from within his political party of a form of direct democracy that allowed registered users of an online platform to propose and vote on subjects for new laws. The party would then develop the most popular proposals into draft legislation and table them in parliament. He proposed that future debates in the “Parliaments in the digital era” series could further examine the online tools that supported direct democracy.

3. Side event on *Breaking down barriers for improved health of young generations: A multisectoral approach*

On 2 April, a side event on the health of young generations was held. The panellists were Mr. I. Askew (Director of the Department of Reproductive Health and Research, WHO), Ms. G. Verburg (SUN Movement), Ms. N. Luo (Zambia) and Mr. F. Ndugulile (United Republic of Tanzania).

Mr. Askew highlighted the importance of governance for a multisectoral response targeting the health and well-being of adolescents. Clear and strong linkages should be made at the local level and the sustainability of resources should be ensured. There were a number of challenges to the effective

implementation of multisectoral policies. Roles, responsibilities and agendas should be clearly defined and understood. He called for the establishment of specialized committees and implementation teams in ministries and parliament, without recommending any single model.

Ms. G. Verburg explained the objectives of the SUN Movement and outlined the importance of nutrition for adolescent mothers and their babies, in particular in the first 1,000 days of the infant's life. She invited parliamentarians to exercise fully their oversight role in holding governments and prime ministers accountable and drew attention to Côte d'Ivoire, where substantial investment in nutrition attested to the strong political commitment towards ending malnutrition.

Ms. N. Luo highlighted the collective efforts of the National Assembly of Zambia to fight child marriage. Legislation was not sufficient. Parliamentarians had to rely on their representative function to increase efforts at the community level, act as role models and fight the persistence of such harmful practices. She explained how relevant ministries coordinated action at the community level to ensure that interventions reached those adolescents most in need.

Mr. F. Ndugulile said that the National Assembly of Tanzania had been partnering with civil society organizations to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized adolescents. Parliamentarians had a duty to translate the concerns of adolescents into legislation, in particular to prevent harmful practices such as child marriage and gender-based violence. While sex education in school was a key driver of change, sexual and reproductive health issues remained taboo, and national programmes could be undermined by the influence held by traditional and religious leaders at the community level.

The panel was followed by a lively and interactive debate in which nine MPs intervened, seven of whom were women. A number of suggestions were made and parliamentarians outlined some of the efforts being made in their countries, including the distribution of dedicated books to encourage a dialogue on sexual and reproductive health issues between children and parents, nutrition programmes, campaigns to raise awareness of inappropriate feeding habits and the involvement of traditional and religious leaders in national health and nutrition campaigns. Challenges included difficulties faced by parliamentarians in working with NGOs, lack of awareness of the link between child marriage and gender-based violence, and a limited focus on fighting harmful behaviours among adolescents. If sexual and reproductive health policies were to be effective, parliaments had to raise issues at the government level and coordinate implementation efforts at the community level.

4. Field visit by the Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

On 31 March, members of the IPU Advisory Group participated in a field visit to a public hospital and in meetings with representatives of civil society and international organizations, members of parliament, and government representatives.

Local representatives of WHO and UNAIDS briefed members of the Advisory Group on the country health profile and the HIV epidemic in the country. Members learned that, notwithstanding the remarkable results achieved with respect to poverty alleviation and access to health services, continuous commitment from the government and parliament was required to accelerate progress and change harmful habits.

At the hospital, members of the Advisory Group met with managers and staff to discuss the care given to pregnant girls and victims of child marriage. Members learned that not only medical care but also psychological support was provided for cases of early pregnancy or violence against girls. They also learned that counselling centres established through partnerships between government and NGOs were located around the country. Members suggested that sex education should be taught in schools and that efforts should be stepped up to promote nationwide campaigns encouraging adolescents to use contraceptives and decrease the rate of early pregnancy.

A working lunch was organized for members of the Advisory Group, representatives of civil society and of WHO and UNAIDS. Two HIV-positive girls and two young sex workers also attended. Members learned that participants recognized the value of most of the clauses included in the recently-approved legislation on child marriage, as well as the efforts of government and parliament to curb the rates of child marriage. However, concern was expressed about a clause that allowed for child marriage in special circumstances. Members learned that child brides were often abandoned, which usually meant that they had to resort to prostitution in order to survive. They also learned that the lack of sex education was a major cause of the HIV-epidemic. That link had been confirmed by the example of two adolescents who had offered to share their personal experience with the Group.

Representatives of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Women’s and Children’s Affairs explained that 389 adolescent clubs were located around the country, where secondary school girls could engage in extracurricular and cultural activities as well as livelihood training courses. Programmes were being implemented to provide birth registration and identity cards to all, which would discourage child marriage. The government was aware of the need to hire and train more registrars, especially in remote areas.

Members of the Advisory Group also met with four members of the Bangladesh Parliament and discussed the provisions of the recently-approved law on child marriage. The MPs stated that the new law would serve to maintain momentum in the fight against child marriage in Bangladesh, and that the controversial clause would not be misused or hinder progress. Regarding the capacity of the Bangladesh Parliament to hold the government to account, the MPs affirmed that all political parties had committed to end child marriage in Bangladesh and were therefore playing a vital role in raising awareness among local communities of the need to end that harmful practice.

5. Joint IPU-UNICEF field visit on child rights issues

In keeping with IPU practice during Assemblies, 40 MPs and parliamentary staff participated in a field visit jointly organized by the IPU and UNICEF. They visited centres dealing with adolescent development and participation (ADP clubs) and early childhood development located in Baunia Badh, Mirpur, in Dhaka.

The ADP clubs were designed to facilitate children’s entry into adulthood. They provided a venue for adolescent girls and boys to learn about their rights, and to meet and discuss issues that mattered to them, such as child marriage, human rights, dowry, birth registration, transmission of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, reproductive health and drug abuse.

The early childhood development centres provided developmentally and age-appropriate learning through playgroups, childcare and pre-primary education for the most disadvantaged. The centres developed the children’s linguistic, social and cognitive skills through singing, and question-and-answer sessions.

Parliamentarians then had discussions with workers at the centres and learned about how the centres worked. They learned that the ADP clubs made adolescents aware of their basic rights. They were told that the teenagers passed on their knowledge to family members, friends and neighbours who did not have the opportunity to attend such clubs.

Following the discussions, they formulated recommendations on how parliament could contribute to efforts to further promote the rights of the child in line with action to tackle socioeconomic inequalities. The recommendations included calling on parliamentarians to make further efforts to break down inequalities and offer equal opportunities for boys and girls; and taking wide-ranging action to improve significantly the well-being of children. The rights of the child should be a priority for parliamentary action.

6. Roundtable on *Parliamentary action plan for nuclear-risk reduction and achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world*

The roundtable was organized by UNFOLD ZERO and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) in cooperation with the IPU on 3 April, to discuss implementation of the resolution adopted at the 130th IPU Assembly [Towards a nuclear-weapon-free world: The contribution of parliaments](#). Mr. E. Markey, a US Senator, sent a video message highlighting the importance of action on nuclear disarmament by the IPU and PNND.

Mr. A. Ware, PNND Global Coordinator, introduced the topic by providing an update on the nuclear weapons situation and threat, and the key diplomatic and multilateral processes to address that threat and advance nuclear disarmament. He referred to a briefing paper on *Nuclear risk-reduction, disarmament and the role of parliamentarians*, which highlighted three multilateral processes: the UN negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons, which had commenced in March 2017; the review cycle for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that would resume in May 2017; and the UN High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, due to take place in 2018. Mr. Ware also noted the connection between cutting nuclear weapons budgets, divesting public funds from nuclear weapons corporations, and financing the SDGs.

Ms. L. Rojas (Mexico) provided additional background on the UN negotiations on a treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons. She expressed the hope that such a treaty would be completed and ready for ratification by the time of the UN High-Level Conference.

Delegates raised a number of issues in the discussion, including whether verification of disarmament and non-proliferation agreements could provide guarantees that such agreements would not be violated. Another issue was how to encourage countries that relied on nuclear weapons for their security to rely instead on international law, cooperative security mechanisms such as the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and/or conventional deterrence.

The issues and ideas discussed in the roundtable would be reflected in the Parliamentary Action Plan for a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World, which was being drawn up by PNND in consultation with parliamentarians and policy experts around the world, and which was based on the above-mentioned IPU resolution.

7. Launch of *Unique Glimpses*, a collection of paintings by children with autism

Unique Glimpses, a collection of paintings by children with autism, was launched at a special event on 4 April in the margins of the IPU Assembly. The event was hosted by Ms. S. Wazed Hossain, Chairperson of the National Advisory Committee on Autism in Bangladesh. *Unique Glimpses* was illustrated with drawings by autistic children and produced by the Shuchona Foundation. It was launched by special guests Ms. S.S. Chaudhury, Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh, and Mr. S.H. Chowdhury, President of the IPU, in the presence of the IPU Secretary General. Several of the autistic children and artists who had contributed to the book were also present. The event brought together MPs from around the world and national stakeholders working in Bangladesh to provide support to children with autism. Special guests and speakers highlighted the importance of inclusion and outreach, and the central role of MPs in serving as a voice for autistic children and in defending their interests and well-being through policymaking. The book was launched following World Autism Awareness Day, celebrated on 2 April.

Elections and appointments

1. Appointment of a Secretary General for a period of four years

The Governing Council appointed the incumbent Secretary General, Mr. M. Chungong, for a second four-year term starting on 1 July 2018 and ending on 30 June 2022.

2. Executive Committee

The Governing Council elected the following member to the Executive Committee:

- Mr. A. Abdel Aal (Egypt) for the Arab Group for a four-year term ending in April 2021.

3. Vice-Presidents of the IPU

The Executive Committee elected the following six Vice-Presidents

- African Group: Mr. D.E. Ethuro (Kenya), continuing his mandate until October 2017
- Arab Group: Mr. A. Abdel Aal (Egypt) until April 2018
- Asia-Pacific Group: Mr. K. Jalali (Islamic Republic of Iran) until April 2018
- Eurasia Group: Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation) until April 2018
- Group of Latin America and the Caribbean: Ms. Y. Ferrer Gómez (Cuba) until April 2018
- Twelve Plus Group: Mr. I. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom) until October 2017.

4. Vice-President of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee elected one of the IPU Vice-Presidents, Mr. I. Liddell-Grainger (United Kingdom), as the Vice-President of the Executive Committee until the end of his term on the Executive Committee (October 2017).

5. Sub-Committee on Finance

The Executive Committee appointed:

- Mr. A. Abdel Aal (Egypt) to represent the Arab Group
- Mr. S. Suzuki (Japan) was renewed until the end of his term on the Executive Committee (October 2018).

6. Bureau of Women Parliamentarians

The Bureau elected the following three regional representatives for a four-year term ending in April 2021:

- African Group: Ms. J. Gakuba (Rwanda)
- Asia-Pacific Group: Ms. R.W. Karirathna (Sri Lanka)
- Eurasia Group: Ms. K. Atshemyan (Armenia).

7. Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

The Governing Council elected by a roll-call vote the following two members for a five-year term ending in April 2022:

- Ms. L. Dumont (France)
- Ms. B. Jónsdóttir (Iceland).

8. Committee on Middle East Questions

The Governing Council elected the following three members to the Committee for a four-year term ending in April 2021:

- Ms. S. Atallahjan (Canada)
- Ms. R. Elwani (Egypt)
- Ms. N. Akter (Bangladesh).

9. Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law

The Governing Council elected the following member for a four-year term ending in April 2021:

- Arab Group: Mr. S. Alkathlan (Saudi Arabia).

10. Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU

The Forum elected the following members to its Board for a two-year term ending in April 2019:

African Group:

- Ms. M. Osoru (Uganda)
- Mr. P. Kalobo (Zambia)

Arab Group:

- Ms. R.S. Al Manthari (Oman)
- Mr. O. Altabtabaee (Kuwait)

Asia-Pacific Group:

- Ms. I.Y.R. Putri (Indonesia)
- Mr. A. Rifau (Maldives)

Eurasia Group:

- Ms. E. Afanasieva (Russian Federation)

Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC)

- Ms. R.B. Itamari Choque (Bolivia)
- Mr. M. Bouva (Suriname)

Twelve Plus Group:

- Ms. S. Haskel (Israel)
- Mr. N. Erskine-Smith (Canada).

The Board also elected Ms. M. Osoru (Uganda) as its President.

11. Bureaux of the Standing Committees

Following elections in the Standing Committees, the following members were elected for a two-year term (renewable) ending in April 2019:

Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

- Ms. S. Dinică (Romania) for the Twelve Plus Group; and
- Ms. W.B. Mustapha (Jordan) for the Arab Group

Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

- Mr. A. Niyongabo (Burundi) for the African Group; and
- Mr. S. Spengemann (Canada) for the Twelve Plus Group

Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

- Mr. A. Toumi (Morocco) to complete the term of Ms. R. Benmassaoud (Morocco), who was no longer a parliamentarian, for the Arab Group
- Mr. S. Gavrilov (Russian Federation) for the Eurasia Group
- Ms. C. L. Crexell (Argentina) for the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC).

12. Rapporteurs to the 138th Assembly

The Standing Committee on Peace and International Security appointed Ms. M. Vargas Barcena (Mexico) and Mr. A. Caroni (Switzerland) as co-Rapporteurs for the subject item *Sustaining peace as a vehicle for achieving sustainable development*.

The Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade appointed Mr. A. Gryffroy (Belgium) as a Rapporteur for the subject item *Engaging the private sector in implementing the SDGs, especially on renewable energy*. It entrusted the IPU President with holding consultations with a view to identifying a second Rapporteur.

The Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights appointed Ms. S. Dev (India) and Mr. N. Schrijver (Netherlands) as co-Rapporteurs for the subject item *Sharing our diversity: The 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy*.

Media and communications

Four press releases were issued during the 136th Assembly. Five daily news conferences were held for the over 200 local media registered. The local media interest in the 136th IPU Assembly was very high. In addition, some 150 media personnel were accredited to the Assembly, predominantly from China, the Russian Federation and the United Arab Emirates.

A total of 56 TV interviews, including three live broadcast ones, were carried out by the IPU Secretary General, IPU Communications, the IPU Gender Programme Officer, and the President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians among others. The IPU was featured on the national daily evening newscasts on at least 14 channels each day of the Assembly. In addition, some 525 articles about the 136th Assembly were published in local and national newspapers in Bangladesh.

IPU Communications also videotaped 24 interviews with selected parliamentarians as material for two videos to be produced later this year for the International Day of Democracy and the launch of the Global Parliamentary Report. IPU Communications also supported the work of the team from IPU TV.

Initial media monitoring on the Assembly showed that more than 4,300 online articles and blog posts mentioning the IPU, women MPs and the 136th Assembly were posted over the Assembly period (from 30 March to 6 April). The articles covered the various themes of the Assembly, as well as bilateral meetings between delegations.

A live Twitter feed using the #IPU136 hashtag was available.

From 1 to 5 April, there were 2,486 hits on IPU Twitter account

According to Google Analytics, there were 6,752 views of Assembly press releases between 27 March and 6 April.

Flickr was again used to distribute photos of the Assembly to media and participants. There were 85,637 views from 31 March to 9 April of Assembly-related photos.

IPU TV was launched during the Inaugural Ceremony of the Assembly. IPU TV is a web-based platform and application to connect the global parliamentary community. MPs can post videos on subjects such as legislation, constituency initiatives, sustainable development, climate change, disaster risk reduction, gender and youth issues.

IPU TV will act as an experience and knowledge sharing platform. It will be a tool and resource to enhance the capacity of parliamentarians to serve their constituents. It will feature a live section and an on-demand library. Posts can only be made by MPs but can be viewed by all.

During the Assembly, the IPU TV production crew carried out interviews with MPs, Speakers of Parliaments, IPU President and IPU Secretary General. This material was uploaded to the IPU TV platform.

During the Assembly, the IPU Annual Report 2016 was launched. Each delegation received a copy. The IPU publications stand proved to be extremely popular and all publications were taken very quickly by delegates. There was considerable demand for copies of the two most recent handbooks for parliamentarians: the Handbook on International Humanitarian Law and the Handbook on Human Rights.

Membership of the Inter-Parliamentary Union*

Members (173)

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Associate Members (11)

Andean Parliament, Arab Parliament, Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), European Parliament, Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS), Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO), Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Parliament of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

* As at the close of the 136th Assembly.

Agenda, resolutions and other texts of the 136th Assembly

1. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the 136th Assembly
2. Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda
3. General Debate on *Redressing inequalities: Delivering on dignity and well-being for all*
4. The role of parliament in preventing outside interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States
(*Standing Committee on Peace and International Security*)
5. Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development
(*Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade*)
6. Reports of the Standing Committees
7. Approval of the subject items for the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security and for the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade for the 138th Assembly and appointment of the Rapporteurs
8. Amendments to the IPU Statutes and Rules
9. Urgent international action to save millions of people from famine and drought in parts of Africa and Yemen

Dhaka Communiqué

Redressing inequalities: Delivering on dignity and well-being for all

*Endorsed by the 136th IPU Assembly
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

We, parliamentarians from 132 countries, gathered in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on the occasion of the 136th IPU Assembly, having debated the problem of inequality in all its forms – social, economic and political – issue the following statement.

While the question of inequality is one that each country needs to settle democratically as part of its own social contract, it is clear to us that extreme inequalities come at a high cost: people are denied the opportunity to flourish to the maximum of their individual potential and in accordance with their human rights; large sectors of the population lose purchasing power, stalling economic growth; power and wealth concentrated in a few hands undermine social cohesion and the very viability of the democratic process, increasing violence and insecurity. Many of our countries are already at this point, and many more will be soon, unless we take resolute, concerted action.

Welcoming Goal 10 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which calls on the international community to "reduce inequalities within and among countries", we pledge to place concern for all inequalities – social, economic and political – at the heart of our work. We take this opportunity to renew our commitment to combat gender inequality, which is rooted in discrimination against women, as a particularly important dimension of this multifaceted problem.

We recognize that reversing the current trend towards growing inequalities is a necessary condition for the implementation of the SDGs and their two principal objectives: eradicating poverty, and putting the world on a sustainable course. We are determined to address the structural causes of inequality and not be satisfied with palliative solutions.

We are deeply concerned that:

- While income and wealth are disproportionately concentrated in the top 1 to 10 per cent of the global population, a growing number of people around the world, particularly young people: are unemployed or under-employed; lack productive assets; are underpaid; have limited access to education, health care and other social services; often live in unsafe communities; and are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of environmental degradation and climate change. These people suffer disproportionately from social ills. They face violence and discrimination, are unable to participate fully in society, and encounter other barriers to realizing their human rights. Refugees, stateless persons and migrants are a large group that is particularly vulnerable to inequality, discrimination and violence;
- Women continue to be paid less than men for the same kind of work, and are overrepresented in the lowest-paid jobs and in precarious employment conditions. They are often denied the right to own property and bear a disproportionate share of the burden of unpaid domestic work;
- Large numbers of people are marginalized or *de facto* excluded from the political process because of their social or economic status; they include women, young people, indigenous people, migrant workers, disabled people, and ethnic minorities;
- A relatively small number of multinationals in the manufacturing, service and agriculture sectors dominate the market and technological innovation, reducing competition and opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as artisanal fisheries and small land owners.

Economic, social and political inequalities are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. This is why our response will take a holistic approach, ensuring that policymaking and decision-making processes are inclusive, participatory and take into account the needs of all.

We will commit to macroeconomic policies that promote: employment as the primary source of livelihood for most people; higher wages; and a fairer distribution of the tax burden between high income and lower income earners, as well as between corporations and individuals. Our economic and social policies will seek to invest in people as the primary resource of our countries. This includes larger investment in education, which provides all people with an opportunity to grow as economic, social and political actors.

As the past few decades have shown, economic growth does not always lead to equal opportunity and shared prosperity. While economic growth remains critical, particularly in developing countries, it will not be sufficient to reduce income and wealth inequalities unless it is accompanied by proactive redistributive policies. In this connection, we reaffirm the 2013 Quito Communiqué (128th IPU Assembly) and, in particular, its call on all countries to assess the success of economic policies based on measurements of well-being that go beyond GDP. We have an obligation to pursue a more sustainable economic model to effectively decouple economic growth from environmental degradation.

In redressing inequalities, each country will have to devise its own solutions, as no single policy prescription can meet all needs. Our debate has highlighted a wide range of measures that parliaments should consider in their efforts to reduce inequalities at the national and global levels, including:

Strengthening legal frameworks

- Ensure that all laws and budgetary allocations promote everyone's human rights;
- Uphold the rule of law and the principle that all people are equal under the law, regardless of social status or personal wealth;
- Enact laws and regulations to facilitate the participation of all citizens, including the most vulnerable and marginalized, in the political process as well as their access to elected office;
- Seek to entrench in the constitution the principle of human dignity and equality of opportunity for all;

Making parliaments more representative

- Strengthen efforts to open parliaments and decision-making to all people, reaching out, listening more and better representing the most impoverished in our own countries;
- Take measures to enhance transparency and protect the political system from the influence of money and organized lobbies, including through conflict-of-interest rules, effective limits to private funding of candidates and political parties, and anti-corruption legislation;
- Enhance the capacity of parliaments to take into account future trends and the needs of future generations;

Making the economy work for all

- Pursue economic and social policies that protect the most vulnerable, including by investing in public goods such as health care, transport and education for the benefit of all citizens;
- Combat tax evasion, including through tax havens, make sure the tax regime is sufficiently progressive, and emphasize direct taxes, taxes on investment income and capital gains, and corporate taxes as part of the revenue mix;
- Institute stronger anti-trust laws and regulations to prevent an excessive concentration of industrial production and assets, such as patents and land, in fewer conglomerates;
- Regulate the financial sector to avoid excessive risk, ensuring that any losses that may occur are not passed on to taxpayers;
- Support entrepreneurship by simplifying licensing and other administrative procedures, and by facilitating access to financing;
- Incentivize small and medium enterprises, including family owned and cooperative enterprises;

Strengthening social dialogue and human capital

- Strengthen labour laws to protect workers' rights, and to guarantee to all a living wage and basic benefits, such as minimum vacation, parental leave and unemployment insurance;
- Ensure that the benefits of automation in all economic sectors are fairly distributed between business owners and workers, including by providing stronger safety nets and workers' adjustment programmes;
- Institute or strengthen public pension schemes, including for informal sector workers and women performing unpaid domestic work;
- Provide affordable public education at all levels as well as training and vocational programmes, particularly for vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities, so as to give all people an equal opportunity to work;

Improving international cooperation

- Strengthen development cooperation to improve the quality and quantity of aid to developing countries, particularly the least developed countries, and to improve the benefits of foreign direct investment in recipient economies;

- Support fair trade practices that ensure fair prices are paid for commodities and natural resources from developing countries;
- Facilitate the economic diversification of developing countries away from commodity dependence;
- Help strengthen global economic and financial governance through the United Nations and other multilateral bodies to prevent capital flight and other shocks;
- Advocate for a fairer representation of the interests of developing countries in the institutions of global economic and financial governance.

We fully realize that growing inequalities produce indirect economic costs that are often hidden and unevenly distributed among the population. We will need to better factor these costs into the budgetary and legislative process. In a similar vein, we will scrutinize the annual budget Bill with a view to reducing inequalities.

As we continue our law-making and oversight work, and in the spirit of the SDGs, in particular of Goal 10, we pledge to our citizens and to the international community our determination to leave no one behind.

As the representatives of the people, we will do our utmost to move this agenda forward.

The role of parliament in respecting the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of States

Resolution adopted by consensus by the 136th IPU Assembly (Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

The 136th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Reaffirming that the principle of refraining from the threat or use of force and the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States are part of the fundamental pillars of international law and international relations,

Recalling the relevant provisions of the resolution adopted by the 132nd IPU Assembly (Hanoi, 2015) *International law as it relates to national sovereignty, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States and human rights*; the resolution adopted by the 128th IPU Assembly (Quito, 2013) *Enforcing the responsibility to protect: The role of parliament in safeguarding civilians' lives*, including its sections relating to international law, human rights, national sovereignty and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States; and the resolution adopted by the 126th IPU Assembly (Kampala, 2012) *Promoting and practising good governance as a means of advancing peace and security: Drawing lessons from recent events in the Middle East and North Africa*,

Affirming that the UN instruments, which stipulate the inadmissibility of external intervention — the Charter of the United Nations, the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the protection of their Independence and Sovereignty (1965), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Friendly Relations Declaration (1970), General Assembly resolution 3314 (XXIX) (1974), the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe “The Helsinki Final Act” (1975), the Declaration on the Deepening and Consolidation of International Detente (1977), the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention and Interference in the Internal Affairs of States (1981), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993) and the 2005 World Summit Outcome — should be respected,

Stressing the responsibility of parliaments to strengthen democracy, promote, protect and encourage respect for human rights, support dialogue, encourage the peaceful settlement of internal disputes, take all necessary actions to consolidate national unity and peaceful negotiation among different sectors of society, and prevent the forcible overthrow of democratically elected and legitimate governments, in accordance with States' obligations under international law and human rights law, including the responsibility to protect as agreed in the 2005 World Summit Outcome,

Underscoring that the people of each country have the inalienable right to determine their own political future, and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development, in accordance with international law,

Underlining, however, that the great challenges which mankind is facing today, such as climate change, terrorism, war and refugees, can no longer be met by one State alone, and that therefore an ever-closer cooperation of parliaments will be necessary,

Expressing its concern about the role of parliaments and their basis in society, in view of numerous arrests of journalists, increasing limitations on civil society's scope for action, and certain tendencies to disempower parliaments by proclaiming over-extended states of emergency or by the unlawful arrest of deputies,

Stressing that parliaments owe their duties to all individuals within a State, and that all human beings without exception bear universal and indivisible human rights,

* The delegations of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Norway, the Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom expressed a reservation on the entire resolution.

Aware that the decisions and resolutions of the UN Security Council have universal legitimacy in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, and that any derogations from those decisions that may be binding in nature may run contrary to international law and the stable rules of international relations, in particular when addressing issues relating to aggression and intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States,

Highlighting both the constructive and preventive nature of parliamentary diplomacy, including its capacity to diffuse or avert tensions and resolve conflicts by peaceful means,

Noting that democracy, good governance and development are inextricably linked and *underscoring* the need to maintain support for democracy in times of economic hardship,

Reaffirming the vital role of women in the prevention and settlement of conflicts, and the importance of women's full and equal participation in all efforts to preserve and promote peace and security, and the need to reinforce the role of women in the decision-making processes associated with conflict prevention and settlement,

Affirming the important role of the equal participation and full involvement of young people in the prevention and settlement of conflicts, and particularly in ensuring the sustainability, inclusiveness and success of peacebuilding and peacekeeping efforts,

Emphasizing the importance of the equal participation and full involvement of national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and persons with disabilities within the democratic framework of the State as part of an inclusive society, which provides a forum for the peaceful resolution of differences,

Believing that all States and parliaments are taking stock of the main lessons to be drawn from the dramatic events in the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world, and that those institutions acknowledge that it is important to pursue democratic constitutional reforms and adopt new laws that ensure government accountability and equal opportunities for all; and *stressing* the need for parliaments and the IPU to continue their support for these democratization processes,

1. *Reiterates* the need to respect absolutely and adhere fully to the Purposes and Principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, and in particular to respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of States, and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States;
2. *Strongly urges* all States to fulfil their obligations under international law, to condemn terrorism in all its forms, as manifested in the invasion and occupation of territories, ethnic cleansing and displacement, the destruction of humanity's archaeological heritage, the establishment of child armies, the abuse of women, and suicide operations; these obligations include refraining from the threat or use of force and respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other States, while also respecting, promoting and protecting the human rights of everyone within their territory;
3. *Urges* parliaments to promote, protect and respect all human rights without distinction as a fundamental basis for the democratic life of national parliaments, and to defend and promote human rights, the rule of law and democracy;
4. *Affirms* that the only way to conduct inter-State relations is to constantly observe the universally recognized principles and rules of international law; and *urges* all States to work towards denying terrorist organizations resources, whether human, military or financial;
5. *Underlines* the role of parliaments in preventing external intervention that threatens States' sovereignty and independence;
6. *Urges* parliaments to establish national legal bases and mechanisms to prevent or counter external intervention in the internal affairs of independent States;
7. *Calls on* parliaments to work on conflict prevention and implementing peacebuilding strategies as part of their parliamentary relations agenda;

8. *Urges* parliaments to resist, with all available means, the politically motivated withdrawal of the immunity of elected members of parliament;
9. *Also urges* parliaments to help ensure a clear separation of powers through an effective system of checks and balances;
10. *Resolutely condemns* all threats or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State;
11. *Urges* parliaments to contribute to increasing the number of working women and to guarantee the principle of equal opportunities in decision-making forums in subnational, national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms designed to prevent and settle conflicts;
12. *Also urges* parliaments to consider ways to increase the number of young people involved in decision-making processes at all levels of national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms designed to prevent outside intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign States and to respect amicable relations between them,
13. *Further urges* parliaments to put in place mechanisms to ensure the representation in the institutions of government of persons with disabilities, minorities and other marginalized groups,
14. *Calls on* all States, regardless of their political, economic, social and cultural systems, to fulfil their duty and responsibility to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the provisions of international law governing relations among sovereign States;
15. *Also calls on* States to prioritize guidelines for development cooperation, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to promote democratic quality and stability indicators;
16. *Welcomes* the contributions of the IPU and parliaments to promoting lasting peace; and *calls for* tensions among peoples to be defused wherever they arise, not only through collective action across political, cultural and religious divides, but also through engaging in a constructive, effective and comprehensive dialogue with all other ethnic, religious and social groups as a means of settling disputes among all States;
17. *Calls on* parliaments to support the State in the fulfilment of its responsibility to protect populations within its borders from incitement to commit, and the commission of, genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing, and only to approve intervention in a foreign State that fails to provide this protection when such intervention is in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations;
18. *Emphasizes* the need to carefully define and assess situations where the responsibility to protect doctrine may potentially be invoked; and *underlines* that military force used under that doctrine shall be deployed as a last resort after exhausting all available diplomatic channels.

Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development

*Resolution adopted unanimously by the 136th IPU Assembly
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

The 136th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Affirming that sustainable development refers to the idea of development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,

Expressing satisfaction that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is based on a holistic approach to sustainable development with a reasonably balanced emphasis on economic growth, social development and environmental protection,

Accepting that one challenge of implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is to make sure that developmental processes are inclusive and broad-based, allow wide participation from all segments of society, and are equally beneficial to all,

Acknowledging that another challenge of implementing the SDGs is to ensure effective delivery of public services by strict monitoring, regular evaluation and restructuring of public services, all of which will depend on the availability of basic infrastructure support, both in rural and urban areas,

Also acknowledging that eradicating poverty in all its forms is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, and that to this end, sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, as well as empowering the poor through education, health and skills development must all be promoted,

Recognizing that rural women are critical agents in poverty reduction, that they are crucial to providing food and nutrition in poor and vulnerable households and to environmental sustainability and that, in other ways, they are also critical to the achievement of all of the SDGs,

Also recognizing that women's financial inclusion is an engine of development that fights poverty, contributes to equitable economic growth, enables women's economic empowerment and thereby improves children's health, nutrition and schooling, whilst benefitting their families and communities,

Underscoring that, according to the Global Findex of the World Bank, women are 15 per cent less likely than men to have a bank account, and nearly 50 per cent of women across the world do not have a bank account,

Considering that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (the 2030 Agenda) and its 17 SDGs recognize the importance of financial inclusion as part of eradicating poverty and achieving well-being for all,

Recalling that in 2016, the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, established the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment to address the specific economic issues that affect women and to support both the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its promise to leave no one behind,

Bearing in mind that the Outcome Document of the General Debate endorsed by the 131st IPU Assembly (Geneva, 2014) points out that achieving gender equality and ending violence against women is the responsibility of both men and women, and that effective change requires both a strong institutional framework and national bodies with the power to take action,

Underscoring the importance of creating a favourable environment for the financial inclusion of women by ensuring equality before the law, especially in areas such as work, family, property and inheritance, and the importance of ensuring that women can live a life free from violence, enjoy their right to education and access health services,

Mindful that access to formal financing institutions helps to increase the equality of income between men and women, generate employment, reduce people's vulnerability to emergency situations, facilitate entrepreneurship, and foster both medium- and long-term saving and planning activities,

Stressing that financial education and financial literacy programmes are critical in achieving comprehensive and sustainable financial inclusion,

Reiterating that mobilizing domestic and international financial resources, as well as capacity-building and technology transfer to developing countries on favourable terms will all play a vital role in providing essential services, public goods and low-cost money transfers or remittances,

Recognizing that parliaments have a strong obligation to champion international law and human rights standards on the empowerment of women and adapt their national legislation accordingly,

Underscoring that the role of parliaments in embracing the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development should be conceived in accordance with international and national laws and with the 2030 Agenda,

1. *Invites* parliaments to promote the development of national, regional and international public policies and strategies that focus on eliminating the legal, cultural and logistical barriers that discriminate against women and prevent their full inclusion in the financial systems of each country, and to promote women's participation in those decision-making processes;
2. *Urges* parliaments to identify the needs and limitations of each region and society by making a complete diagnosis based on gender- and age-disaggregated information, which will allow the root causes of this challenge to be addressed, both according to its particular circumstances and from a gender perspective;
3. *Calls on* parliaments to take all appropriate measures to remove legal provisions that discriminate against women in areas such as work, family, property and inheritance, as a key step towards addressing the gender gap in financial inclusion;
4. *Also calls on* parliaments and governments to adopt legal frameworks and policies that increase financial inclusion in general, the financial inclusion of women in particular, and *invites* them to mainstream gender perspectives in all financial policies, including policies facilitating and promoting women's rights and opportunities to participate in the labour market;
5. *Proposes* that parliaments encourage the implementation of educational programmes for women and girls aimed at developing the knowledge and expertise of women to access financial services and financial literacy, including through the use of new technologies, and ensure they are accessible and responsive to the needs of women, including rural women and women in vulnerable situations;
6. *Requests* parliaments to promote the inclusion of women in the extensive use of widely accessible information and communication technologies that facilitate women's access to digital financial services, and enable innovative initiatives such as establishing digital payment systems, electronic money and access to accounts via mobile telephony, while addressing security and privacy concerns;
7. *Calls on* parliaments to encourage private companies and banks to design a wide range of attractive, low-cost financial products that provide incentives and banking facilities for women to develop good savings habits;
8. *Also calls on* parliaments and governments to adopt and promote policies and laws that enhance fair competition practices in the provision of financial services as a means of enhancing innovation and provision of quality services;
9. *Further calls on* parliaments to support the adoption of national financial inclusion strategies with policy objectives and quantitative targets on women's financial inclusion, and to actively monitor their implementation;

10. *Appeals to* parliaments to promote innovative financial services that are accessible to women in rural areas, such as itinerant banking services or village banks;
11. *Invites* parliaments to develop cooperative links with national, regional and international financial institutions for the implementation of programmes aimed at promoting the financial inclusion of women;
12. *Encourages* parliaments to promote partnerships with governments, the private sector and civil society so as to accomplish financial and digital inclusion, especially for women;
13. *Urges* parliamentarians to ensure that existing policies and programmes provide access to credit, as well as to financial and business training for women with lower incomes in order to facilitate their financial inclusion;
14. *Calls on* parliaments to ensure that women have continued access to formal credit and government support; and *invites* them to promote public policies and private sector initiatives that expand financial access for women-owned enterprises, as well as entrepreneurial education and training opportunities for women, in order to close the gender gap and empower women entrepreneurs worldwide;
15. *Strongly urges* parliaments to encourage reforms that offer women the right to access economic resources and financial services on an unbiased basis;
16. *Calls on* parliamentarians to encourage the private banking sector to reduce the costs of opening and maintaining a savings account and to tailor financial products to women's specific needs;
17. *Also calls on* parliaments and governments to take, where applicable, measures to facilitate women's access to personal identification, as a critical step towards their financial inclusion;
18. *Stresses* the importance of collecting, using and disseminating gender-disaggregated data to support evidence-based policymaking for the development of gender-inclusive financial systems;
19. *Invites* parliaments, governments and international stakeholders to step up efforts to reduce the digital divide between countries with regard to information and communication technologies and broadband connectivity in order to facilitate financial inclusion;
20. *Calls for* increased official development assistance to expand financial inclusion through, inter alia, developing new products tailored to the needs of financially excluded groups, supporting transition to digital payments, designing financial education programmes, and adopting strong customer protection frameworks, while addressing gender disparities;
21. *Calls on* parliaments to encourage the adoption of gender-responsive policies and regulatory frameworks that support financial inclusion while providing appropriate consumer protection against threats such as fraud, cybercrime, over-indebtedness or unethical business practices;
22. *Invites* parliaments to create an enabling environment that allows women to actively participate in the policy dialogue and decision-making on financial inclusion;
23. *Advises* governments, parliaments, the private sector and civil society to assume responsibility for championing the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development.

Tougher migration policies around the world and the risk of human rights violations

Results of the roll-call vote on the request of the delegation of Mexico for the inclusion of an emergency item

R e s u l t s

Affirmative votes.....256	Total of affirmative and negative votes	603
Negative votes347	Two-thirds majority.....	402
Abstentions515		

Country	Yes	No	Abst.	Country	Yes	No	Abst.	Country	Yes	No	Abst.
Afghanistan		<i>Absent</i>		Georgia		<i>Absent</i>		Poland		15	
Albania		<i>Absent</i>		Germany		19		Portugal			13
Algeria			15	Ghana		<i>Absent</i>		Qatar		8	
Andorra			10	Guinea	8	5		Republic of Korea		<i>Absent</i>	
Angola			14	Guyana		<i>Absent</i>		Romania			14
Argentina		<i>Absent</i>		Hungary	10		3	Russian Federation	5	10	5
Austria		6	6	Iceland		<i>Absent</i>		Rwanda		12	
Bahrain		11		India		<i>Absent</i>		Samoa		<i>Absent</i>	
Bangladesh	20			Indonesia		<i>Absent</i>		San Marino	5		5
Belarus		<i>Absent</i>		Iran (Islamic Republic of)	10		8	Sao Tome and Principe			10
Belgium		13		Iraq		<i>Absent</i>		Saudi Arabia		14	
Bhutan			10	Ireland	8		3	Senegal		<i>Absent</i>	
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	12			Italy			17	Seychelles		<i>Absent</i>	
Botswana			11	Japan			20	Singapore		<i>Absent</i>	
Brazil	10			Jordan		12		Singapore		<i>Absent</i>	
Burkina Faso			13	Kenya		15		South Africa			17
Burundi			12	Kuwait		11		South Sudan		10	
Cabo Verde			10	Lao People's Dem. Republic		<i>Absent</i>		Spain	15		
Cambodia		<i>Absent</i>		Latvia		11		Sri Lanka		<i>Absent</i>	
Cameroon			13	Lebanon		11		Sudan		<i>Absent</i>	
Canada		15		Lesotho			11	Suriname	10		
Central African Republic		<i>Absent</i>		Luxembourg		<i>Absent</i>		Swaziland			11
Chad		<i>Absent</i>		Madagascar			10	Sweden		12	
Chile		<i>Absent</i>		Malawi		<i>Absent</i>		Switzerland		12	
China	10		13	Malaysia		14		Thailand			18
Comoros			10	Maldives		<i>Absent</i>		Timor-Leste	11		
Cuba	13			Mali	13			Turkey			18
Cyprus		<i>Absent</i>		Malta		<i>Absent</i>		Tuvalu			10
Czech Republic			13	Mauritius			11	Uganda			15
DPR of Korea	12			Mexico	20			Ukraine			17
DR of the Congo			17	Monaco	10			United Arab Emirates			10
Denmark		<i>Absent</i>		Mongolia	5	4	1	United Kingdom		18	
Djibouti		<i>Absent</i>		Morocco		15		United Republic of Tanzania			15
Dominican Rep.	10			Namibia			11	Uruguay		<i>Absent</i>	
Egypt			10	Nepal		<i>Absent</i>		Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)	15		
El Salvador		<i>Absent</i>		Netherlands		13		Viet Nam	11		8
Estonia		11		Niger			13	Zambia			13
Ethiopia		<i>Absent</i>		Nigeria			20	Zimbabwe	13		
Fiji		<i>Absent</i>		Norway		<i>Absent</i>					
Finland		10		Oman		11					
France		18		Palestine		11					
Gabon			11	Panama		<i>Absent</i>					
				Philippines		<i>Absent</i>					

N.B. This list does not include delegations present at the session which were not entitled to vote pursuant to the provisions of Article 5.2 of the Statutes.

The legalization of settlements by the Israeli regulation law: A violation of international law

Results of the roll-call vote on the request of the delegation of Palestine, on behalf of the Arab Group for the inclusion of an emergency item

Results

Affirmative votes	459	Total of affirmative and negative votes	652
Negative votes	193	Two-thirds majority	435
Abstentions	466		

Country	Yes	No	Abst.	Country	Yes	No	Abst.	Country	Yes	No	Abst.
Afghanistan	Absent			Georgia	Absent			Poland			15
Albania	Absent			Germany		19		Portugal			13
Algeria	15			Ghana	Absent			Qatar	8		
Andorra			10	Guinea	8	5		Republic of Korea	Absent		
Angola			14	Guyana	Absent			Romania			14
Argentina	Absent			Hungary			13	Russian Federation	11	5	4
Austria		6	6	Iceland	Absent			Rwanda		12	
Bahrain	11			India	Absent			Samoa	Absent		
Bangladesh	20			Indonesia	Absent			San Marino	7		3
Belarus	Absent			Iran (Islamic Republic of)	18			Sao Tome and Principe			10
Belgium		13		Iraq	Absent			Saudi Arabia	14		
Bhutan			10	Ireland	9		2	Senegal	Absent		
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	9		3	Italy	9		8	Seychelles	Absent		
Botswana			11	Japan			20	Singapore	Absent		
Brazil	10			Jordan	12			South Africa	17		
Burkina Faso	10		3	Kenya			15	South Sudan	10		
Burundi			12	Kuwait	11			Spain			15
Cabo Verde			10	Lao People's Dem. Republic	Absent			Sri Lanka	Absent		
Cambodia	Absent			Latvia		11		Sudan	Absent		
Cameroon			13	Lebanon	11			Suriname	5		5
Canada		15		Lesotho			11	Swaziland		11	
Central African Republic	Absent			Luxembourg	Absent			Sweden		12	
Chad	Absent			Madagascar			10	Switzerland		8	4
Chile	Absent			Malawi	Absent			Thailand			18
China	23			Malaysia	14			Timor-Leste			11
Comoros	10			Maldives	Absent			Turkey	18		
Cuba	13			Mali	13			Tuvalu			10
Cyprus	Absent			Malta	Absent			Uganda			15
Czech Republic			13	Mauritius			11	Ukraine	6		11
DPR of Korea	12			Mexico		12	8	United Arab Emirates	10		
DR of the Congo			17	Monaco			10	United Kingdom		18	
Denmark	Absent			Mongolia			10	United Republic of Tanzania	15		
Djibouti	Absent			Morocco	15			Uruguay	Absent		
Dominican Rep.	10			Namibia	11			Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)	15		
Egypt	10			Nepal	Absent			Viet Nam	11		8
El Salvador	Absent			Netherlands		13		Zambia			13
Estonia		11		Niger			13	Zimbabwe			13
Ethiopia	Absent			Nigeria			20				
Fiji	Absent			Norway	Absent						
Finland		10		Oman	11						
France	6	12		Palestine	11						
Gabon			11	Panama	Absent						
				Philippines	Absent						

N.B. This list does not include delegations present at the session which were not entitled to vote pursuant to the provisions of Article 5.2 of the Statutes.

Urgent international action to save millions of people from famine and drought in parts of Africa and Yemen

Results of the roll-call vote on the request of the delegations of Belgium, Kenya and the United Kingdom for the inclusion of an emergency item

R e s u l t s

Affirmative votes.....932	Total of affirmative and negative votes 1,068
Negative votes136	Two-thirds majority..... 712
Abstentions 50	

Country	Yes	No	Abst.	Country	Yes	No	Abst.	Country	Yes	No	Abst.
Afghanistan	<i>Absent</i>			Georgia	<i>Absent</i>			Poland	15		
Albania	<i>Absent</i>			Germany	19			Portugal	13		
Algeria	15			Ghana	<i>Absent</i>			Qatar		8	
Andorra	10			Guinea	13			Republic of Korea	<i>Absent</i>		
Angola	14			Guyana	<i>Absent</i>			Romania	14		
Argentina	<i>Absent</i>			Hungary	13			Russian Federation	15		5
Austria	12			Iceland	<i>Absent</i>			Rwanda	12		
Bahrain		11		India	<i>Absent</i>			Samoa	<i>Absent</i>		
Bangladesh			20	Indonesia	<i>Absent</i>			San Marino	5		5
Belarus	<i>Absent</i>			Iran (Islamic Republic of)	18			Sao Tome and Principe	10		
Belgium	13			Iraq	<i>Absent</i>			Saudi Arabia		14	
Bhutan	10			Ireland	11			Senegal	<i>Absent</i>		
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	12			Italy	17			Seychelles	<i>Absent</i>		
Botswana	11			Japan	20			Singapore	<i>Absent</i>		
Brazil	10			Jordan		12		South Africa	17		
Burkina Faso	13			Kenya	15			South Sudan	10		
Burundi	12			Kuwait		11		Spain	15		
Cabo Verde	10			Lao People's Dem. Republic	<i>Absent</i>			Sri Lanka	<i>Absent</i>		
Cambodia	<i>Absent</i>			Latvia	11			Sudan	<i>Absent</i>		
Cameroon	13			Lebanon		11		Suriname	10		
Canada	15			Lesotho	11			Swaziland	11		
Central African Republic	<i>Absent</i>			Luxembourg	<i>Absent</i>			Sweden	12		
Chad	<i>Absent</i>			Madagascar	10			Switzerland	12		
Chile	<i>Absent</i>			Malawi	<i>Absent</i>			Thailand	18		
China	23			Malaysia	14			Timor-Leste	9		2
Comoros			10	Maldives	<i>Absent</i>			Turkey	18		
Cuba	13			Mali	13			Tuvalu	10		
Cyprus	<i>Absent</i>			Malta	<i>Absent</i>			Uganda	15		
Czech Republic	13			Mauritius	11			Ukraine	17		
DPR of Korea	12			Mexico		12	8	United Arab Emirates		10	
DR of the Congo	17			Monaco	10			United Kingdom	18		
Denmark	<i>Absent</i>			Mongolia	10			United Republic of Tanzania	15		
Djibouti	<i>Absent</i>			Morocco		15		Uruguay	<i>Absent</i>		
Dominican Rep.	10			Namibia	11			Venezuela (Bolivarian Rep. of)	15		
Egypt		10		Nepal	<i>Absent</i>			Viet Nam	19		
El Salvador	<i>Absent</i>			Netherlands	13			Zambia	13		
Estonia	11			Niger	13			Zimbabwe	13		
Ethiopia	<i>Absent</i>			Nigeria	20						
Fiji	<i>Absent</i>			Norway	<i>Absent</i>						
Finland	10			Oman		11					
France	18			Palestine		11					
Gabon	11			Panama	<i>Absent</i>						
				Philippines	<i>Absent</i>						

N.B. This list does not include delegations present at the session which were not entitled to vote pursuant to the provisions of Article 5.2 of the Statutes.

Urgent international action to save millions of people from famine and drought in parts of Africa and Yemen

Resolution adopted by consensus by the 136th IPU Assembly
(Dhaka, 4 April 2017)*

The 136th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Gravely concerned about the humanitarian situation in East Africa, the Horn of Africa, Nigeria and Yemen, where millions of people are facing the real threat of starvation due to famine and drought, and dire circumstances of food insecurity,

Recognizing that some of these nations are facing the third consecutive year of drought, causing thirst and hunger, decimating livestock, destroying livelihoods, spreading disease and triggering large-scale population movements,

Noting that Ethiopia and Kenya are among the world's top 10 refugee host countries and that refugees are especially vulnerable in the current crisis,

Appreciating the UN call for urgent international action to address the situation affecting more than 20 million people, and *recognizing* that other parts of Africa face food insecurity and drought,

Mindful of the call for concerted global action issued during a report to the UN Security Council by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Stephen O'Brien, on 10 March 2017 after visiting countries facing or at risk of famine, which followed an earlier call for decisive action by the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, on 22 February 2017,

Deeply alarmed that the UN Under-Secretary-General observed that, since the start of 2017, the international community "is facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations"; and *fully recognizing* that the disastrous impacts of violent conflict in creating famine should be a matter for global concern, not just for those countries directly affected,

Expressing deep concern about the slow response of the global community in addressing the humanitarian situation in the nations affected by famine and drought, in terms of mobilizing resources to offer relief aid and other forms of assistance to the affected populations and nations,

Acknowledging that failed rains and changing weather phenomena largely caused by global warming have contributed to the drought in East Africa and the Horn of Africa,

Considering the importance of the right to food, which is implicitly included in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and that the right to life and the right to health can only be enjoyed if the right to food, including access to clean water, is guaranteed,

Mindful of the commitments made by leaders of all UN Member States in September 2015 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, including, in particular, Goal 2 on zero hunger and Goal 6 on clean water and sanitation,

Welcoming the measures taken and efforts made by the governments of countries affected by famine and drought, UN specialized agencies, the European Union and non-governmental organizations to mitigate and combat famine in several areas of East Africa, the Horn of Africa and Nigeria,

Obligated by the IPU's own commitments in the Hanoi Declaration (2015) to advance the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 to ensure parliaments hold governments to account in turning words into action by implementing effective measures that will achieve such goals and leave no one behind,

Recognizing that it is only through concerted international action that this potentially unprecedented famine and the looming humanitarian catastrophe facing many parts of Africa and Yemen can be averted,

* The delegation of India expressed a reservation on preambular paragraphs 5 and 6, and operative paragraphs 6 and 11.

1. *Appeals for* immediate action by the international community to support the appropriate global humanitarian bodies in taking urgent steps that will address the current famine crisis affecting millions of people in East Africa, the Horn of Africa, Nigeria and Yemen, including by ensuring that adequate human and financial resources are dedicated to this effort;
2. *Calls on* the United Nations to commit the resources necessary to provide humanitarian support and nutritional relief to the critically affected areas in parts of Africa and Yemen, as well as long-term development assistance;
3. *Also calls on* Members of the IPU that have not already done so to exert influence, as appropriate, on their governments so that the latter commit to funding voluntary humanitarian aid contributions to address this crisis;
4. *Invites* IPU Member Parliaments to encourage their governments to contribute to the extensive international campaign of the United Nations to raise funds in order to finance the fight against the famine; one of the possibilities for raising these funds is through voluntary means, using the funding model followed by UNITAID;
5. *Calls on* the United Nations and the international community to remain focused on those most vulnerable to the current drought and famine conditions, especially women, children and the elderly;
6. *Urges* the Women, Gender and Development Directorate of the African Union, the Pan-African Women's Organization (PAWO), UN Women, the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and other relevant international organizations to support the affected populations, especially women and children, in rebuilding their livelihoods and employment prospects, and strengthening their capacity to care for their families, so as to enable them to regain their health;
7. *Also urges* the global community to assist the affected countries in developing comprehensive national resilience mechanisms, including by addressing the root causes of famine and drought;
8. *Further urges* the global community to step up climate change mitigation and adaptation interventions aimed at curbing global warming and invest in measures that support vulnerable countries in addressing climate change;
9. *Calls in particular* on governments to take appropriate and immediate actions to end conflict and hostilities and remove anything that hinders humanitarian access in parts of Africa and Yemen;
10. *Urges* national authorities to ensure the safety of the staff and activities of humanitarian organizations, as well as operational health-care infrastructure and health-care staff in the regions affected by famine and drought, especially if they are also affected by conflict;
11. *Also urges* governments, relevant international and regional organizations, and the IPU Secretariat to support countries in strengthening their democratic institutions, including by paying close attention to the rule of law;
12. *Reaffirms* that, beyond this call for immediate global action to address the current famine and drought crisis, access to food and water is a basic human right; famine must never be used as a weapon of war and those who use it in this way should be brought to justice;
13. *Calls on* parliamentarians of IPU Member Parliaments to prioritize legislation that promotes food security and proper mitigation measures against famine and drought.

Report of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights

*Noted by the 136th IPU Assembly
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Interactive debate on *Sharing our diversity: The 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy*

The debate took place on Monday 3 April with the Committee President Ms. B. Tshireletso (Botswana) in the chair. It was introduced by the IPU Secretary General and the three Rapporteurs of the next resolution, Ms. S. Dev (India), Mr. N. Schrijver (Netherlands) and Mr. I. Umakhanov (Russian Federation). The Rapporteurs recalled some of the fundamental points of the Universal Declaration. Democracy was both a set of principles and a form of government. The extent to which people were able to exercise their human rights, such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, was a significant marker of democracy. Democracy was essential to progress and led to happier and more open societies. Non-democratic societies tended to create the conditions where human rights were eroded, where people were under pressure to remain silent and where corruption could flourish.

The question of minority rights was a prominent part of the discussion. The universal character of the core principles of democracy was reaffirmed by everyone who spoke. Participants also drew attention to the national, ethnic and religious particularities of each country, which meant that there could never be one form of democracy alone. It was necessary to pay constant attention to people's rights. One third of the world's population continued to live in conditions of low levels of human development. The most marginalized, including groups such as women and girls, people living in rural areas, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual people, often had limited negotiating power to influence institutions.

Delegates raised a number of issues of general or specific relevance to the discussion on the state of democracy in their countries and in the world. Representatives of Cyprus and Zambia emphasized the need to develop a participatory culture and the importance of educating young people about the values of democracy. The representative of Jordan called for citizens to be active and highlighted that country's law on decentralization as a means of developing a "bottom-up" democracy.

The representative of Iceland noted that people had limited means to influence government between elections and called for new forms of participation that would allow people to express who they wanted to be. While noting that social media could help to give individuals a voice, many representatives warned of the risks of relying on emotion when making decisions. Public opinion polling could provide valuable insights, but more reliable methods were required to ensure the accuracy of opinion polls.

The representative of South Africa noted that elected leaders needed to respect the time limits of their constitutional terms of office, and called for powerful systems of transparency and accountability. The representative of the United Arab Emirates told the Committee that the country had created a Ministry of Tolerance and Happiness, whose aims were to strengthen social cohesion and to ensure that everyone had a chance to achieve social justice. The representative of Sri Lanka pointed out that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly included the principles of democracy in Goal 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), which underlined how important democracy was to development.

In conclusion, the Rapporteurs noted that democracy was a process that was never fully achieved. The road to democracy was not easy, and required a constant commitment to work with the people. The interventions from the representatives had demonstrated a "wonderful world of pluriformity and diversity" in the practice of democracy and the issues each country faced. At the same time, there was strong agreement on the universality of the principles of democracy, as set out in the Universal Declaration on Democracy.

Report on the debate *Act now for adolescents: the role of parliamentarians in promoting adolescent health and well-being.*

On Tuesday 4 April, the Committee held an interactive debate on *Act now for adolescents: the role of parliamentarians in promoting adolescent health and well-being*. The President, Ms. B. Tshireletso (Botswana), was in the Chair and the debate was moderated by Ms. H. Fogstad, Executive Director of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. The panellists were Dr. V. Chandra-Mouli (World Health Organization), Ms. M. Fairouz (Restless Development Nepal), Mr. C. Sebuhoru (Rwanda) and Ms. S. Khan (UNAIDS Bangladesh).

The main causes of death among adolescents across the world were road traffic injuries, suicide, unsafe abortion and early maternity. However, hundreds of millions more suffered long-term health consequences as a result of harmful habits developed during adolescence, including the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. In many societies, menstruation remained a taboo subject. Girls sometimes had no knowledge of it until their first menstrual period, and might have limited access to sanitary products and support. Adolescents were not a priority in the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations had only recently incorporated their specific needs into its global health strategies.

Panellists' introductory remarks and interventions from the floor highlighted the importance of policies and laws that addressed the health and well-being of adolescents. There was a need for accessible, youth-friendly health services and for greater awareness among adolescents of their health rights. Systematic data was needed to help governments and parliaments take informed policy decisions. Budgets must be allocated, and policy outcomes closely monitored to check that they were achieving the intended results.

Legislation was necessary, but not sufficient, to tackle harmful norms and habits. Dr. Chandra-Mouli noted that the proportion of adolescent boys who thought it was acceptable to beat their wife in certain circumstances was practically the same as in older generations. Parliamentarians had a responsibility to speak out so that attitudes evolved, particularly towards teenage girls.

Parliamentarians from 28 countries (of whom 12 were women) shared numerous examples of initiatives to promote adolescent health and well-being. Representatives from many countries, notably in Africa, pointed out that a very significant percentage of their population was young, making it even more important to ensure their well-being.

The parliament of Rwanda had been raising awareness for many years about the issues discussed during the debate, including by ensuring sexual and reproductive health was part of the school curriculum. The representative of Botswana noted that its Children's Act provided for a series of protections for people under the age of 18. Under the country's criminal code, which was widely used by the police, the criminal age of responsibility was 14. Laws must be harmonized, and awareness raised at all levels of government.

The representative of Italy noted that more attention should be given to adolescents who were migrants or refugees. The representative of South Africa said that that country provided free education to all and had increased the numbers of one-stop centres to help victims of gender-based violence. The representative of Kenya noted that a multi-sectoral approach was needed to improve the health and well-being of adolescents. Sectors such as health, education and transportation should deliver as one. The representative of Sweden stated that investments in sexual and reproductive health yielded significant social and economic dividends. The representative of Cuba shared a successful case in the fight to end early pregnancies involving the introduction of sexual and reproductive education in schools.

In conclusion, despite some progress and a number of good initiatives, there was much more that parliaments and parliamentarians could do to improve the health and well-being of adolescents. Passing laws, allocating budgets, and monitoring the status of adolescent health and well-being were necessary steps. It was also crucial that parliamentarians advocated for change to the social norms that continued to hamper the healthy development of young boys and girls.

Report of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs

*Noted by the 136th IPU Assembly
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

The President, Mr. A. Avsan (Sweden), opened the meeting. The three new members of the Bureau were confirmed: Mr. A. Toumi (Morocco), Ms. C. Crexell (Argentina) and Mr. S. Gavrilov (Russian Federation). Mr. Toumi introduced himself. Mr. Avsan then invited the President of the IPU, Mr. S. Chowdhury, to make a few remarks on the role of parliaments in ensuring implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the main theme of the session.

Mr. Chowdhury provided the broader context of the debate, which stemmed from a strategic partnership between the UN and the IPU. The partnership had been further strengthened the previous year as a result of a new Cooperation Agreement between the two organizations as well as a resolution of the General Assembly on *Interaction between the UN, national parliaments and the IPU*. Mr. Chowdhury noted that the first year of the SDGs had already elapsed and that MPs needed to move quickly into action.

Mr. Avsan then proceeded to open the plenary debate, which consisted of two sessions.

Session 1:

The following panellists took part in the first session on the parliamentary follow-up on the SDGs in preparation for the 2017 session of the HLPF: Mr. S. Mukerjee, Country Director of UNDP Bangladesh, Mr. F. Rabbi, Deputy Speaker (Bangladesh), and Ms. J. Luveni, Speaker (Fiji). Ms. P. Torsney and Mr. A. Motter (IPU Secretariat) contributed remarks.

The debate highlighted the global review process for the SDGs undertaken through the annual session of the HLPF in July. The IPU was working to help prepare parliaments to provide input into that process and build their capacities to mainstream the SDGs in their work. The IPU-UNDP **self-assessment toolkit for parliamentarians** was designed to help parliaments review their own internal structures and processes to ensure that they were fit for purpose for implementation of the SDGs.

The IPU had provided parliaments with a **model resolution** highlighting the key steps that parliaments could take to institutionalize the SDGs, such as asking the government to create a national plan for the SDGs and report annually to parliament on its implementation. The IPU was working to engage parliaments in the **voluntary national reviews** (VNRs) presented by countries to the HLPF each year. In 2017, forty-four countries would present VNRs. The IPU had brought that process to the attention of the parliaments of those countries. It encouraged them to contribute to the VNR and report back to the Organization through a questionnaire by June 2017.

Bangladesh, the host country, offered a good case study of how the SDGs could be implemented, including through the engagement of parliament. As highlighted by Mr. Rabbi and Mr. Mukerjee, the Government had already taken several important steps: a special coordinator for the SDGs had been appointed in the Prime Minister's office, a directorate within the civil service supported work across all policy areas, an action plan for the SDGs was in the pipeline, a detailed costing of the SDGs was being performed, and the current five-year development plan (established before the SDGs) had been adjusted to accommodate the new development agenda before the next plan, which would fully reflect the SDGs.

Similar steps were being taken in the Bangladesh parliament: clusters of SDGs had been assigned to specific thematic committees to ensure systematic follow up; a motion on the SDGs, inspired by the IPU model, was expected to be tabled in May. Support provided by UNDP to the parliament included working to provide additional research capacities to the budget office, supporting draft legislation, and helping to promote dialogue between MPs and their constituents.

Other examples of parliamentary engagement in the SDGs were discussed in the course of the meeting. As Ms. Luveni noted, the previous year's IPU needs assessment mission to her parliament had provided many useful suggestions. Steps taken so far included: organizing regular Speakers' debates open to all citizens and providing all MPs with a diary whose pages featured the various SDGs as a constant reminder. The parliament of China had adopted a new national plan that reflected the SDGs and was organizing seminars for MPs. The parliament of Thailand would soon undertake an assessment using the IPU-UNDP self-assessment toolkit and would make sure to review a new 20-year national plan being completed by the government. The parliament of Zimbabwe had created two

committees: a “thematic” committee to perform oversight of government departments and another committee comprising the chairs of all standing committees that provided policy coordination within parliament. In Sweden, the parliament had examined the SDGs and concluded that current policies and implementation tools were already aligned with the new agenda, and that only a few adjustments were required to meet all the goals by 2030.

Overall, the debate emphasized the strong role parliaments needed to play to build national ownership of the SDGs while ensuring the “domestication” of that global framework to each country’s specific context. Parliaments were encouraged to persuade governments to produce regular progress reports on the SDGs, including voluntary national reviews to the HLPF. It was noted that financing would be key to the success of the SDGs and that parliaments must work to ensure sufficient resources through the budget process, including by diverting military expenditures towards development.

Session 2:

The second panel focused on the main theme of the 2017 HLPF, *Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world*. It featured Mr. N. Kumar, Chief of the Social Development Division of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), Ms. C. Hunter, UN Women country representative, Mr. S. Kinga, Speaker (Bhutan), Ms. C. Roth, Deputy Speaker (Germany), and Ms. B. Sampatisiri, MP (Thailand).

As the experience of the Asia-Pacific region amply illustrated, poverty could be conquered. Rapid growth over recent decades had helped to curtail poverty drastically. However, some 400 million people still lived in poverty in the region. Rising inequality, weak social protection, lack of access to education and health care, and a growing rural-urban divide were challenges that still needed to be tackled. Persons with disabilities, migrants and women were among the groups most likely to be poor or at risk of poverty.

Policies targeting the most vulnerable groups were key to poverty eradication. Discrimination, the main driver of poverty amongst women, was not always evident, especially when it occurred within the household. For example, girls from poor households were primarily those who married too young (under 18), sacrificing their education and professional prospects. Female-headed households might appear to earn more than men, but, in reality, they remained more vulnerable because of a lack of assets on which to fall back in the event of unemployment or illness.

Discrimination was responsible for lower wages and other important causes of women’s poverty outside the household. Domestic workers, who were predominantly female, lacked basic protection because they were systematically excluded from labour laws. Public policy must target the most vulnerable women. Such policies could be designed and put in place only if parliamentarians made a special effort to reach out to the affected groups, seeking their input and ensuring that it was taken into account in policy development.

The question of whether poverty reduction depended exclusively on economic growth was debated. Mr. Kinga made the case for a different approach based on the pursuit of happiness as the main policy objective. He noted that, in Bhutan, the success of all economic, social and environmental policies was measured by the Gross National Happiness (GNH) index, as opposed to the traditional Gross Domestic Product (GDP) index, which merely measured the value of goods and services exchanged. The GNH consisted of five elements of human well-being: material, spiritual, emotional, cultural, and environmental. By applying the GNH approach, poverty in Bhutan had fallen from 23 per cent in 2007 to 12 per cent in 2012, and a further reduction to 5 per cent was expected by 2018. The key to making the GNH approach work was institutional. The parliament had simply redesigned all reporting requirements and entire parliamentary committees to reflect the elements of the GNH.

Thailand’s experience with poverty reduction hinged on another innovative approach, namely the so-called “sufficiency economy philosophy.” While not denying the importance of economic growth, that approach underscored the virtues of moderation and harmony with nature. Applied to farming, the approach had meant converting land from resource intensive monocultures to organic methods based on crop rotation and natural inputs, which had lowered poverty rates in rural Thailand.

Although poverty might not be as pronounced in developed countries as it was in developing ones, developed countries also had an obligation, under the SDGs, to look after their poor. Ms. Roth argued that developed countries like her own must take responsibility for the plight of the poor in developing countries. She noted that developed countries’ agricultural subsidies damaged livelihoods in developing

countries, and that arms sales from developed countries to developing countries enabled violent conflict and caused untold damage to development prospects. A drastic re-think of global trade and economic policies was required to give developing countries a real chance of succeeding against poverty.

The debate also highlighted the importance of submitting all policy proposals that the government brought before parliament to an SDG test. It was noted that many of the policy interventions that worked well against poverty started at the local level, which was where people expected jobs and essential services to be available. It might therefore be necessary to decentralize authority to local governments and empower local communities. Most importantly, parliaments must ensure that policies and budgets targeted the most vulnerable directly and in accordance with their human rights.

Forty-one delegations attended the Committee session. The vast majority of them were from developing countries, and no developed country intervened in the debate. That could be an indication that the SDGs had yet to gain traction among developed countries, which was inconsistent with the original intention of the SDGs as a universal agenda.

Executive Committee Statement on the situation in Venezuela

*Endorsed by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

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 Venezuelan.

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.

Presidential statement on the recent attack on the Paraguay Parliament

*Endorsed by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

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.

Cooperation with the United Nations System

List of activities undertaken by the IPU between 15 September 2016 and 15 March 2017

*Noted by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Democracy and human rights

Work on the second edition of the flagship **Global Parliamentary Report** continued on schedule. The Report is jointly produced by the IPU and UNDP. Publication is expected by September this year.

UNDP and the IPU continued their joint project of **assistance to the Parliament of Myanmar**.

A Regional Seminar on the SDGs and Human rights for parliaments in the Pacific region was organized in collaboration with OHCHR and UNDP. It was hosted by the Parliament of Fiji from 16-18 November.

At the 135th IPU Assembly (October), the IPU and OHCHR launched an updated version of their human rights handbook for parliamentarians (originally published in 2005). The handbook promotes better understanding among parliamentarians of international human rights norms and mechanisms, so that MPs can better contribute to their full implementation. The handbook was published in English; French and Spanish versions will be available early 2017.

The IPU maintained **regular contact with OHCHR**, including with its country offices, in order to promote satisfactory settlements in cases before the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians. On 4 December, IPU participated in a roundtable discussion at UN headquarters, **Turning international norms into local reality: Implementation, support and prevention**. The IPU **exhibit on the human rights of parliamentarians** was on display at UN Headquarters from 13 to 24 February.

In September, the IPU delivered a statement at the **High-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on addressing large movements of refugees and migrants**. Subsequently, the IPU provided input to the modalities resolution for a major conference in 2018, which is set to establish a new global compact on migration. The resolution acknowledges the role of parliaments on this issue and invites the President of the General Assembly to hold hearings with parliamentarians and other stakeholders in the lead up to the conference.

Gender equality and youth empowerment

On 20 September, the IPU President participated in and delivered a statement at the high-level event, **Together for the 2030 Agenda: Partnering for women, children and adolescents**.

In October, a **high-level parliamentary delegation led by the IPU President met the CEDAW Committee** at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The President and Committee discussed their work priorities, how to further their current joint work and how to enhance the role of parliaments in implementing CEDAW. At the CEDAW Committee's February session, the IPU also **reported on the level of women's participation** in the parliaments and governments of the countries under review, and on the level of parliamentary involvement in the State reporting process.

In October and November, the IPU Secretary General took part in several events to promote gender equality in his capacity as **International Geneva Gender Champion**. These included a panel debate at UN Headquarters organized with UN Women. The debate, **Women and politics: Beyond the vote** was preceded by a screening of the film *Suffragette*. On **International Women's Day** (8 March), the IPU Secretary General took part in activities organized by the UN Office at Geneva as part of the International Gender Champions initiative. This year's theme was **the power of sports in promoting women's rights**.

On 12 and 13 November, the IPU, UN Women and the Committee on equal opportunity for women and men of the Parliament of Turkey, organized a **training workshop for women parliamentarians** on leadership, communications and media relations.

The IPU-UN Women **Roadmap for substantive equality 2030** was launched at a special event on 14 February while a number of parliamentarians were in New York to attend the annual Parliamentary Hearing. The Executive Director of UN Women and the IPU Secretary General attended.

A new edition of the IPU-UN Women **Map of Women in Politics** was launched at the 61st Commission on the Status of Women in New York. On 17 March, the Parliamentary Meeting at the Commission considered the economic empowerment of women. Three side events were held with various UN partners on 16 March.

On 21–22 November 2016, five members of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians took part in the inaugural **Forum of Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law** organized by OHCHR in Geneva. The Forum discussed issues under the theme *Widening the democratic space: The role of youth in public decision-making*. The delegation of young parliamentarians contributed their experiences to the debate. The IPU partnered with the Envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Youth, UNDP, OHCHR, the European Youth Forum and the Nigerian NGO YIAGA. Together they launched the **Not Too Young to Run** campaign.

On 30–31 January, three members of the IPU Forum of Young Parliamentarians participated in the 2017 session of the **Economic and Social Council Youth Forum**. In addition to the regular sessions, the MPs were interviewed in the SDG media hub and participated in a side event on being "Not Too Young to Run".

International peace and security

In November the IPU worked with the UN Office at Geneva, the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform and other partners to co-host two events during Geneva Peace Week. The event was designed to highlight how parliaments can contribute to sustainable peace. This was the first event of its kind and was entitled *When peace agreements fail to secure sustainable peace: Learning from Yemen, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka*. It examined the challenges and opportunities in a number of country-specific situations. The second event was called *Inequality as a danger to sustainable peace: Converging perspectives on human rights and peacebuilding*. It brought together experts to discuss the impact of societal inequality on sustainable peace from the perspectives of human rights and peacebuilding.

For the first time ever, parliaments and parliamentarians were acknowledged in a **Security Council resolution** as key actors in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The resolution was adopted on 15 December. It was the culmination of three years of engagement with the UN and parliaments on this issue.

On 24 January the IPU participated in the **high-level dialogue on sustaining peace** organized by the President of the General Assembly. The IPU representative delivered a speech and also remarked in two roundtable discussions that the UN needed to engage more closely with parliaments as political actors and not just recipients of technical assistance. The report of the high-level dialogue will set the stage for a larger UN conference on this topic during the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

From 31 January to 2 February, the IPU and the **UN Office for Drugs and Crime** co-organized a meeting with the Egyptian Parliament in Aswan, Egypt. The meeting focused on parliamentary action to counter terrorism. Parliamentarians from the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf States discussed the challenges that arise when extremism leads to terrorism. They identified regional and national strategies for effective responses, and welcomed the draft of a plan of action driven by parliamentarians on how parliaments can act to prevent terrorism. The plan was conceived to fill the current implementation gaps in UN resolutions relating to terrorism.

The October 2016 session of the IPU Committee on UN Affairs dealt in part with the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN Peacekeepers. The report of that Committee session was therefore shared with members of a new **UN task force to review the UN response to allegations of sexual abuse**.

Sustainable development

The IPU contributed to a number of development discussions at UN headquarters in New York, including: the **joint meeting of ECOSOC and the Second Committee of the General Assembly** on changing the political economy of globalization (7 October); a panel discussion organized by the **UN Office for South-South Cooperation** on Thailand's sufficiency economy (12 January); and the **Fifteenth Coordination Meeting on International Migration** (16-17 February).

On migration, the IPU began consultations with the Office of the President of the General Assembly on possible ways to engage parliaments in the process for a **global compact for a safe, orderly and regular migration**, which will culminate with a global conference in September 2018. The discussion followed the adoption of a resolution in January, which invites parliaments to contribute to the process.

With support from UNDP, the IPU made a major contribution to the **second High-level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation** (Nairobi, 28 November to 1 December 2016). A one-day parliamentary meeting to reflect on the key issue of the Meeting's agenda was held on 29 November. On 30 November, there was also a smaller side event to focus on the capacity-building needs of parliaments, organized with the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs and the Association of European Parliamentarians with Africa. Much of IPU's contribution to the process was well reflected in the outcome document of the second High-level Meeting.

Parliaments and the Sustainable Development Goals: A self-assessment toolkit was launched at a parliamentary seminar for the Latin American region held in Panama City on 1 December. It was produced by the IPU and UNDP in English, French, Spanish and Arabic. The toolkit includes a questionnaire that parliaments can use to review their own capacities to implement the SDGs through the legislative and oversight process.

In all, the IPU organized five regional seminars on the SDGs, which were attended by officials and experts from UNDP, UNAIDS, WHO and UN Women. The seminars were held in the Pacific, Latin America, South Asia, Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

On 13 November, the IPU and the Parliament of Morocco convened the annual Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakech (COP22/CMP12). A total of 300 delegates from more than 60 countries attended. The parliamentarians were informed about the main issues of the Conference from those working full-time on climate change questions. MPs had the chance to improve their knowledge of the recommendations included in the IPU's Parliamentary Action Plan on Climate Change, and discussed how to swiftly operationalize the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. The outcome of the Parliamentary Meeting was presented to the main UN Conference.

An IPU representative participated in the **annual ECOSOC retreat** with UN ambassadors and other UN officials on 20 and 21 January. The retreat was an opportunity to review some of the political and organizational aspects of the 2017 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and related processes.

The **2017 Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations** (13–14 February) was dedicated to SDG 14 (*Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development*). The hearing was entitled *A World of Blue: preserving the oceans, safeguarding the planet, ensuring human well-being in the context of the 2030 Agenda*. It attracted 150 MPs and several UN high representatives. The outcome of the Hearing will be one of the contributions to the UN Ocean Conference in early June.

The parliaments of the 40 countries that have volunteered to submit **progress reviews to the HLPF** session in July were all informed of the process by the IPU Secretary General. The parliaments have been invited to participate in their respective national reviews and return a questionnaire to the IPU that will help to assess the quality of the process.

Senior-level interaction

Officials from over a dozen UN organizations and specialized agencies attended the 135th IPU Assembly (Geneva, October 2016) and made contributions to the debates and deliberations.

On 17 January, the IPU Secretary General, Mr. Martin Chungong, participated in the first briefing and brainstorming session with Geneva-based international organizations hosted by the new **UN Secretary-General**, Mr. António Guterres. Mr. Chungong reiterated the IPU's commitment to the SDGs. The Director of the Division for Member Parliaments and External Relations and the Head of the Office of the Permanent Observer to the United Nations met the Chief of Staff to Mr. Guterres on 13 February in New York. It laid the ground for a more detailed meeting with UN departmental heads later in the year, as established by GA resolution 70/298.

During the annual Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations, the IPU President and Secretary General met with the President of the UN General Assembly and other UN officials, to discuss future cooperation.

Rules and Procedures of the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund

*Adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

BACKGROUND

1. The IPU aims to achieve universal membership. Some parliaments remain unaffiliated while others have been suspended periodically for reasons that include non-payment of assessed contributions. The parliaments of many small island States in the Caribbean and South Pacific regions often face financial constraints. Others that are already Members lack the capacity to ensure their full-fledged participation in IPU activities - including statutory sessions - due to limited financial resources at their disposal.

2. As a matter of policy, the IPU does not provide systematic financial assistance to parliaments for participating in its proceedings and other activities. This approach differs from other parliamentary organizations which partially fund the participation of parliamentarians in their events.

3. The Parliamentary Solidarity Fund (PSF) has been created as a practical measure aimed at attaining universal membership in the face of financial constraints and encouraging solidarity among parliaments around the world, while respecting the IPU's financial policies and the rights and responsibilities of membership.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

4. The PSF is established as an internal IPU mechanism for granting financial assistance to parliaments that face financial constraints, with a view to facilitating their participation in IPU activities. It is managed in conformity with the IPU's Statutes and Rules, including the Financial Regulations. The IPU Secretary General will account for and report on PSF grants as part of his or her overall financial management responsibilities. The income and expenditure of the PSF are to be accounted for through a single internal extra-budgetary cost centre.

5. The PSF may be used to facilitate the participation of eligible parliaments in mainstream IPU activities through travel and subsistence grants. The primary purpose is to facilitate participation at the regular IPU statutory Assemblies, although applications for support to attend selected specialized events or missions may also be considered.

6. PSF funds may not be used to pay assessed contributions or arrears of contributions due by any Member Parliament.

7. The expenditure under the PSF shall not be subject to programme support cost recovery.

AUTHORIZATION

8. Decisions concerning the disbursement of PSF grants will be made under the overall authority of the IPU Executive Committee.

9. The Sub-Committee on Finance will review applications to the PSF at its meetings held before each sitting of the Executive Committee. Based on the eligibility of the parliament and the merits of the application, the Sub-Committee will make grant recommendations for the Executive Committee's review and approval (or otherwise) for participation at the following two sessions. In exceptional circumstances, the Sub-Committee may consider grant applications received between Assemblies and, if necessary, request special approval from the Executive Committee.

10. The income and expenditure of the PSF will be reported within the regular Financial Situation updates presented at each session of the Governing Council and Executive Committee.

CRITERIA FOR ELIGIBILITY

11. To be eligible for consideration as a beneficiary of the PSF, a parliament must:

- (a) express its intention to become affiliated or reaffiliated to the IPU; *and*
- (b) be assessed at the minimum possible rate of IPU contributions;

Parliaments of countries experiencing economic hardship brought about by natural disasters or civil conflict may also be considered for eligibility.

Grants shall not be given to parliaments of countries internationally recognized to be tax havens or drug hubs.

12. In addition, and in exceptional circumstances, targeted financial assistance may be granted to current IPU Member parliaments in financial difficulty that otherwise meet the criteria in paragraph 11(b).

RESOURCES

13. On the revenue side, the PSF may receive voluntary contributions from parliaments, government agencies, foundations and other external donors. Such contributions will be earmarked for "parliamentary solidarity" and used exclusively for that purpose. The soliciting and acceptance of PSF revenues is to be consistent with the IPU Guidelines for Voluntary Funding.

14. Provision of PSF grants to parliaments will be subject to the availability of sufficient voluntary contributions in the PSF account.

15. If required, the IPU Executive Committee may also consider allocating a maximum of CHF 20,000 per annum from the core budget to facilitate the participation of at least one parliament in IPU activities in the course of each calendar year. Any core funds allocated are to be offset by voluntary funds, if and when they become available.

PAYMENT MODALITIES

16. For all PSF grants, the following general procedures will apply:
- (a) The interested parliament must convey a written application for financial assistance from the PSF to the Secretary General of the IPU, including a justification for the request.
 - (b) Eligible parliaments may apply to the PSF for the grant of a lump sum not exceeding CHF 20,000 per annum.
 - (c) The amount of the grant requested should reflect the geographical locations of the beneficiary parliament and the Assemblies/events.
 - (d) Delegates of parliaments benefiting from PSF support are responsible for making their own visa, travel, accommodation and subsistence arrangements.
 - (e) Transfer of funds for a PSF grant will be made from a bank account of the IPU to a bank account of the beneficiary parliament, not to the bank account of the individual MPs travelling.
17. In the case of a grant for participation at statutory Assemblies, the following specific terms will apply:
- (a) Grants will be made to allow the eligible parliament to send a delegation composed of two MPs to each of the two statutory Assemblies taking place during a given calendar year. Any additional members of the delegation, including staff members, would be expected to travel and be accommodated at the expense of the parliament in question.
 - (b) Each beneficiary parliament must ensure that its delegations are gender-balanced and that they include representatives of both the ruling party and the opposition in parliament.
 - (c) The grant will be split into two tranches, with one tranche being transferred in advance of each Assembly. If the terms of the grant are not adhered to for the first Assembly, the second tranche will not be transferred for attendance at the second Assembly.
18. After one full calendar year of financial support, a PSF-beneficiary parliament will endeavour to participate in IPU Assemblies through its own means or with the assistance of its own bilateral donors. The establishment of the PSF does not preclude IPU Member Parliaments from considering twinning/mentoring arrangements whereby one parliament may undertake to support the participation of another eligible parliament directly, on a bilateral basis. In turn, a group of PSF-eligible parliaments themselves may, for example, initiate a mechanism for pooling their resources with a view to sending their delegates to IPU events on the basis of rotation.

DURATION AND TERMINATION

19. The PSF may remain in operation indefinitely unless discontinued.
20. As it is an internal IPU mechanism, the PSF may be terminated at any time upon the decision of the Executive Committee. Any donated funds that may remain in the PSF at that point will be applied to parliamentary solidarity activities as decided upon by the Executive Committee. Once all remaining funds have been fully liquidated, the cost centre used for the PSF will be closed.

Work programme of the Committee on Middle East Questions for 2017

*Noted by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Reference and background

The Committee, at its session held in Geneva in October 2016 on the occasion of the 135th Assembly, endorsed the results of its first Roundtable on Water held in May-June 2016 in Geneva, which reflected the spirit of dialogue and goodwill. In order to obtain a concise picture of the mechanisms envisaged for implementing its recommendations, the Committee asked the Secretariat to draw up an agenda before the end of the year.

I. Second Roundtable on Water (date and venue to be confirmed)

The Committee reconfirmed its decision taken during the first Roundtable on Water to hold a second roundtable, to discuss the recommendations and the implementation plans. The scope of activities of the Committee will depend on its core funding resources and the mobilization of additional funding for the agreed projects.

II. Establishment of the Middle East Parliamentary Network on Water (PNoW)

The network will be to create a **community of practice**. The PNoW shall also be a platform for exchanging good practices in legislation related to water and water consumption.

III. Proposed first meeting of the PNoW (date and venue to be confirmed)

The kick off meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the work programme and to receive tailored capacity enhancement programmes on water and sustainability issues.

IV. Meeting of the Committee in St. Petersburg (October 2017)

The PNoW will report back to the IPU Committee on Middle East Questions to brief it on the actions and progress to date. Reporting may also include the feedback from the pilot countries using legal and policy baselines and stakeholder engagement to identify a plan for implementation of SDG 6.

V. Proposed roundtable on science, technology and power

Depending on the process and the experiences of the roundtable approach, the Committee on the Middle East Questions could consider a parallel approach by holding the first roundtable on science, technology and power, with the support of the new agreement that the IPU signed with CERN, and its programme of science for peace. The Committee's approach would be to build regional cooperative dialogue, driven by the SDG's and science as the common leading factor for its implementation.

Statistics of the Gender Partnership Group

*Noted by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Status of participation of women delegates at the 136th Assembly of the IPU (at 4 April 2017)

Composition of delegations at the last eight IPU statutory meetings (October 2013 - present)

Meeting	Total delegates	Total/percentage of women delegates		Total delegations	Total/percentage of all-male delegations (2 or more)		Total all-female delegations (2 or more)	Total single-sex delegations (2 or more)	Total single-member delegations (male and female)
		Women	Men		Women	Men			
Dhaka (at 4/04/17)	608	192	31.6	126	12	10.5	1	13	12
Geneva (10/16)	693	228	32.9	141	15	11.5	3	18	11
Lusaka (03/16)	636	190	29.9	126	19	15.8	0	19	6
Geneva (10/15)	647	210	32.5	133	12	9.9	2	14	12
Hanoi (03/15)	675	189	28.0	128	16	13.7	1	17	11
Geneva 14 (10/14)	717	229	31.9	145	18	12.9	1	19	6
Geneva 14 (03/14)	705	214	30.4	145	16	11.9	2	18	11
Geneva 13 (10/13)	539	168	31.2	132	16	13.2	2	18	11

Single-sex, multi-member delegations present in Dhaka (status on 4 April 2017)

N°	Country	Dhaka 17			Geneva 16			Lusaka 16			Geneva 15			Hanoi 15			Geneva 10/14			Geneva 03/14			Geneva 13		
		Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total
1	DPR Korea	0	3	3	0	4	4	0	4	4	absent			0	4	4	absent			absent			absent		
2	Djibouti	0	3	3	0	3	3	absent			1	3	4	1	2	3	2	2	4	0	3	3	absent		
3	El Salvador	0	2	2	1	3	4	absent			1	3	4	1	4	5	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	3	4
4	Guatemala	0	2	2	2	0	2	absent			absent			absent			0	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	2
5	Guyana	0	2	2	absent			absent			not affiliated														
6	Iceland	3	0	3	1	2	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3	2	1	3
7	Japan	0	3	3	1	3	4	1	4	5	1	2	3	1	5	6	1	5	6	1	5	6	0	6	6
8	Kuwait	0	7	7	absent			0	7	7	1	7	8	0	7	7	0	5	5	0	7	7	0	5	5
9	Lebanon	0	2	2	1	3	4	0	2	2	1	3	4	absent			1	4	5	1	3	4	1	3	4
10	Lesotho	0	2	2	1	3	4	1	3	4	2	2	4	1	0	1	2	3	5	2	3	5	2	3	5
11	Monaco	0	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	2	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	2	2	0	2	2
12	Philippines	0	2	2	3	5	8	absent			1	5	6	1	5	6	3	5	8	1	6	7	1	3	4
13	Qatar	0	4	4	0	4	4	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	4	4	0	5	5	0	2	2	0	1	1

Single-member delegations present in Dhaka (status on 4 April 2017)

N°	Country	Dhaka 17			Geneva 16			Lusaka 16			Geneva 15			Hanoi 15			Geneva 10/14			Geneva 03/14			Geneva 13		
		Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total	Women MPs	Men MPs	total
1	Albania	0	1	1	1	3	4	0	3	3	1	2	3	0	1	1	1	2	3	1	3	4	1	2	3
2	Belarus	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	2	0	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	1	2
3	Central African Republic	0	1	1	suspended			suspended			suspended			suspended			suspended			suspended			suspended		
4	Cyprus	1	0	1	2	2	4	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	3	4	1	3	4	1	3	4	1	2	3
5	Dominican Republic	1	0	1	2	1	3	absent			0	1	1	1	3	4	2	3	5	2	0	2	1	3	4
6	Ghana	1	0	1	1	4	5	1	4	5	1	4	5	1	4	5	2	3	5	1	5	6	0	4	4
7	Luxembourg	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	2	2	absent			0	3	3	absent			absent			absent		
8	Madagascar	0	1	1	4	4	8	1	4	5	4	4	8	3	5	8	4	1	5	suspended			suspended		
9	Malta	0	1	1	absent			0	2	2	absent			0	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	2	0	2	2
10	Samoa	0	1	1	absent			absent			absent			absent			absent			0	1	1	absent		
11	Sierra Leone	1	0	1	absent			2	3	5	absent			1	0	1	absent			absent			absent		
12	Tuvalu	0	1	1	not affiliated																				

Revised mandate of the IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

*Noted by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Background

The IPU Advisory Group on HIV/AIDS and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) was established in 2006 after a meeting of members of parliament held at the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS. The Group initially focused on HIV/AIDS and related issues. In 2012, the Group's mandate expanded to include MNCH, to reflect the fact that the IPU had started to work on this topic.

The Advisory Group consists of a small number of parliamentarians who spearhead efforts in their parliaments on HIV/AIDS and MNCH issues. Its mission consists of:

- Providing guidance to IPU Member Parliaments about implementing international commitments on HIV/AIDS and MNCH;
- Helping to design information and training material for parliamentarians throughout the world;
- Conducting field visits to learn lessons from national MNCH interventions and responses to HIV/AIDS, which can be shared with the wider parliamentary community;
- Acting as the organizing committee of inter-parliamentary conferences on HIV/AIDS and MNCH;
- Expanding the scope of parliamentary action on HIV/AIDS and MNCH by identifying more effective strategies; and
- Prompting other parliamentarians to assume leadership positions on HIV/AIDS and MNCH issues.

The Advisory Group has focused its attention on strengthening parliamentary leadership in efforts to ensure universal access to HIV/AIDS and MNCH services. Particular attention has been paid to ensuring access for vulnerable, marginalized and key affected populations (women, children, adolescents, men who have sex with men, sex workers and injecting drug users). The Group has also worked hard to raise awareness about the impact of punitive and discriminative legislation, stigma, discrimination and traditional practices. It has organized numerous capacity-building and awareness-raising activities for national parliaments, particularly in the area of MNCH. Internationally, Advisory Group members have represented the IPU and the global parliamentary community in a number of high-level HIV/AIDS and MNCH partnerships, events and processes.

The Advisory Group is supported by IPU projects on HIV/AIDS and MNCH and their dedicated staff. The Group reports to the IPU Governing Council.

Rationale for revised mandate

At the end of 2015, the Millennium Development Goals were replaced by the broader and more ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs present an agenda that is relevant to all people in all countries and aims to ensure that no one is left behind. SDG Goal 3 seeks to: *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*. It is linked to 13 ambitious targets that call for action on universal health coverage, road accidents, communicable and non-communicable diseases, reproductive health, and many others. With the launch of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030), the global health community will prioritize work on ending preventable deaths, ensuring health and well-being, and expanding enabling environments for women, children and adolescents.

If IPU action on health is to continue being relevant, it must be aligned with the new global vision of health. This is reflected in the draft IPU Strategy for 2017–2022 as follows:

Health is fundamental to human security: It is critical to ending extreme poverty, promoting development and transformative change, and achieving the SDGs. Across the globe, far too many people, including women, children and adolescents, still have little or no access to good-quality essential health services and education. They remain unable to attain their maximum potential as human beings and to participate fully in society, making a significant contribution to the communities in which they live. For these reasons, the IPU will assist parliaments in completing the unfinished business of the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including combating HIV/AIDS, and fully implementing the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. In cooperation with our partners - the World Health Organization (WHO); the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH); and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria - we will open avenues for strong parliamentary engagement to achieve a vision of health and universal coverage that leaves no-one behind.

That vision builds on the approach of the IPU and the Advisory Group. It addresses health from a human rights and governance perspective, as opposed to a clinical or public health viewpoint. It puts emphasis on people, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable, and aims to build on the Advisory Group's past success. By exploring synergies, it will address the social and economic inequities responsible for inadequate health worldwide. The health issues that are prioritized in the new IPU Strategy will be addressed using current practices. The proposal to change the Group's name to *The IPU Advisory Group on Health* reflects this approach.

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IPU ADVISORY GROUP ON HEALTH

Proposal for new Rules and Practices

MANDATE

The IPU Advisory Group on Health shall provide a global parliamentary focal point for health-related legislative work. The Group shall support the implementation of the health component of the IPU Strategy by focusing on inequalities and discrimination that stand in the way of universal access to services and to prevention. Its main areas of work shall be Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health, including HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights. In this context, the Advisory Group will also pay attention to how universal health coverage, health security and emerging epidemics relate to its core mandate.

More specifically, the Advisory Group shall: offer guidance to IPU Members on implementing relevant international commitments; help to design information and training material for parliamentarians; conduct field visits to learn lessons from national responses that can be shared with the wider parliamentary community; and expand the scope of parliamentary interventions by identifying more effective strategies.

GROUP MEMBERS

The IPU Advisory Group on Health shall be composed of 12 members of national parliaments. The IPU President shall appoint members of the Group in consultation with IPU Member Parliaments. Members shall be appointed on the basis of attested expertise and a track record of achievement in the field of health. Its membership should be geographically representative and gender-balanced.

Advisory Group members shall serve for a single four-year term.

The mandates of members who fail to participate in three consecutive activities of the Advisory Group shall be automatically terminated.

International organizations shall participate in the Advisory Group's work in a technical advisory capacity. Those organizations include: UNAIDS; The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis; the World Health Organization; and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

CHAIRPERSON

The Advisory Group shall elect its Chairperson for one year. He/she shall be eligible for re-election for one further term.

The Advisory Group may also elect a Vice-Chairperson for one year following the same procedure as for election of the Chairperson.

SESSIONS

The Advisory Group shall meet twice a year in regular session. Its sessions shall be held *in camera*. The Advisory Group shall set the dates for its sessions upon proposals made by the Secretary General. At least one of the sessions shall be held during an IPU Assembly. Additional meetings may be held if the Group so decides.

AGENDA

The provisional agenda of the Advisory Group shall be drawn up by the Secretary General, in consultation with the Group's Chairperson.

DECISIONS

As a general rule, the Advisory Group's decisions shall be taken by consensus. If it fails to reach consensus, the Group shall decide by simple majority of the members present. The Chairperson shall have the casting vote.

MISSIONS

The Advisory Group may decide to carry out field visits, principally to examine the role played by a given national parliament in addressing issues within the Group's mandate. Such missions shall be conducted in accordance with the *Concept note on field visits* (attached), adopted by the Advisory Group on 23 March 2007.

ADVISORY GROUP REPORTS

The Advisory Group shall report on its work to the IPU Governing Council, of which it shall be a subsidiary body.

Amendments to the Statutes and Rules of the IPU

Statutes

*Amendments adopted by the 136th IPU Assembly
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Article 25.1

Amend the existing Article as follows:

25.1 The Executive Committee shall be composed of the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, 15 members belonging to different Parliaments and, the President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians **and the President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians of the IPU.**

Article 25.2

Amend the existing Article as follows:

2. The President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union shall be ex officio President of the Executive Committee. Fifteen members shall be elected by the Governing Council; not less than 12 shall be elected from among the members of the Governing Council to which they shall continue to belong during their mandate. ~~At least three of the members elected must be women.~~ **Each sex shall be represented by no less than one third of the elected members.***

* * * * *

Rules of the Assembly

*Amendments adopted by the 136th IPU Assembly
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Rule 4

Amend the existing Rule as follows:

1. The Assembly will meet twice a year and normally last for four days. ~~The second~~ **At least one** session of the year ~~will~~ **shall** be held in Geneva, unless the IPU governing bodies decide otherwise.
2. The place and date of each Assembly shall be determined by the Governing Council, if possible one year in advance (cf. Statutes, Art. 21 (b), Assembly Rule 6). **The Assembly may only be held in a host country if all IPU Members, Associate Members and Observers are invited and if their representatives shall be granted the visas required for participation by the government of the host country.** The convocation of the Assembly shall be sent to all Members of the IPU at least four months before the opening of the session.

Rule 11.2(a)

Amend the existing Rule as follows:

- (a) A request for the inclusion of an emergency item must relate to a **recent major event situation** of international concern, on which ~~it appears necessary~~ **urgent action by the international community is required and on which it is appropriate** for the IPU to express its opinion **and mobilize a parliamentary response**. Such a request must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in order to be accepted.

Rule 15.1

Amend the existing Rule as follows:

1. The Assembly shall start by holding a General Debate with an overall theme. During this General Debate, Members may also address the political, economic and social situation in the world. This debate ~~shall not~~ **may** give rise to the adoption of ~~an motion or draft resolution~~ **outcome document, as decided by the Steering Committee and approved by the IPU Executive Committee.**

* * * * *

Rules of the Standing Committees

*Amendments adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Rule 7.5

Amend the existing Rule as follows:

5. The Standing Committees shall elect a President and a Vice-President from among the members of their Bureau. The posts of President and Vice-President shall **normally** be filled at a single election. The geopolitical groups shall coordinate among themselves so as to ensure, to the extent possible, an equitable distribution of the posts of President and Vice-President of Standing Committees.

* Modality for the implementation of the amendment to Article 25.2 to the Statutes:
Groups with 4 seats will include an equal number of men and women;
Groups with 3 seats will include at least one man and one woman;
Groups with 2 seats will include an equal number of men and women;
Groups with 1 seat will ensure that the seat is held at least by a man and a woman over three terms.

Rule 18

Amend the existing Rule as follows:

Any Member of the IPU may submit a proposal for a subject item to be discussed by a Standing Committee at a future Assembly. Such proposals shall be deposited with the IPU Secretariat ~~no later than 15 days before the opening of the Assembly preceding the one where the subject will be discussed~~ **up to one day prior to the meeting of the respective Standing Committee Bureau.**

* * * * *

Rules and Practices of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

Amendments adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session (Dhaka, 5 April 2017)

- Loss of membership due to repeated absence

Insert a new sentence and short complementary phrase into Rule 1(2) of the Rules and Practices of the Committee. The new text proposed is below in bold type. Article 1(2) would therefore be drafted as follows:

"Committee members shall be elected for a single five-year term. In case of resignation, loss of parliamentary mandate or death of a member, or if the affiliation of the parliament to which the member belongs is suspended, his/her term shall automatically come to an end. **Members who are absent for two consecutive sessions without a valid reason may lose their seat by decision of the Governing Council following a recommendation by the Committee. Upon loss of Committee membership**, another person shall be elected from the same geopolitical group for a new, full five-year term."

- Members bringing interpreters in other languages

Add a new Article 4 in Rule 3 ("sessions"), which would read:

During sessions, the IPU shall provide interpretation from and into English, French and Spanish. Case files and other documentation shall be provided in English and French only. In the event that neither English, French or Spanish is their mother tongue, members may bring interpreters to interpret into and from an additional language. Members shall be responsible for covering the costs of such interpretation and informing the IPU Secretariat sufficiently in advance so that practical arrangements can be made. The members shall ensure that the interpreters are of high quality and respect the confidentiality of the Committee's proceedings.

* * * * *

Financial Regulations

Amendment adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session (Dhaka, 5 April 2017)

Rule 5.10

Amend the existing Rule as follows:

10. Any Member of the IPU whose affiliation was suspended for failure to meet its financial obligations towards the IPU shall remain accountable for these arrears. Should such a Parliament subsequently present a request for reaffiliation **earlier than 10 years after the date of its suspension**, it shall pay, at the time of its reaffiliation, at least one third of the outstanding arrears and shall present a plan for the settlement of the full remaining amount over a reasonable period of time. Until the full sum is paid, this amount shall remain as a special debt and shall not be considered as arrears under the provisions of Articles 4.2 and 5.2 of the Statutes.

Calendar of future meetings and other activities

*Approved by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

Regional seminar for Young Parliamentarians of the Asia-Pacific region	COLOMBO (Sri Lanka) 25-26 April 2017
Regional seminar for the Asia-Pacific region on the SDGs	HO CHI MINH CITY (Viet Nam) 11-13 May 2017
Information seminar on the structure and functioning of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for English-speaking participants	GENEVA (IPU Headquarters) 16-19 May 2017
Parliamentary meeting at the 70 th World Health Assembly	GENEVA (Switzerland) May 2017 (Date to be confirmed)
Regional Conference on Violence against Women and Girls for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia regions	BUCHAREST (Romania) 12-14 June 2017
Regional workshop on Caribbean Small Island Developing States and the SDGs	PORT OF SPAIN (Trinidad and Tobago) 20-21 June 2017
Regional seminar for Western and Central African parliaments on promoting child nutrition	OUAGADOUGOU (Burkina Faso) 27-29 June 2017 (Suggested dates)
Regional seminar on <i>Translating international human rights commitments into national realities: The contribution of parliaments to the work of the UN Human Rights Council</i>	El Salvador First half of July 2017 (Date to be confirmed)
Parliamentary meeting at the UN high-level political forum on sustainable development	NEW YORK Mid-July 2017 (Date to be confirmed)
Regional seminar for young parliamentarians in Africa	ABUJA (Nigeria) July 2017
13 th Workshop of Parliamentary Scholars and Parliamentarians organized by the Centre for Legislative Studies at Hull University and sponsored by the IPU	WROXTON (United Kingdom) 29-30 July 2017
Second interregional seminar on parliamentary capacity-building and the further implementation of the SDGs	BEIJING (China) September 2017
39 th session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO	GENEVA (Switzerland) September-October 2017 (Dates to be confirmed)
Parliamentary session within the framework of the annual WTO Public Forum	GENEVA (Switzerland) September-October 2017 (Dates to be confirmed)
137 th Assembly and related meetings	ST. PETERSBURG (Russian Federation) 14-18 October 2017

Regional seminar on the contribution of parliament to the promotion and the protection of the rights of the child on the occasion of the CEMAC Parliamentary session	CEMAC Parliament HQ MALABO (Equatorial Guinea) October-November 2017 (Dates to be confirmed)
Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP23/CMP13)	BONN (Germany) 12 November 2017
Fourth Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians	OTTAWA (Canada) 17-18 November 2017
International Conference on Migration	VALLETTA (Malta) (Second half of November 2017)
Annual Session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO	BUENOS AIRES (Argentina) 11-14 December 2017
Conference for gender equality committees in the framework of the joint IPU, UN Women and the Committee on Equal Opportunity for Women and Men of the Parliament of Turkey project	Venue to be confirmed (Second half of 2017)
Regional seminar on parliaments and the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540	Venue and date to be confirmed
12 th Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament	Bolivia (Venue and date to be confirmed)
Conference on counter-terrorism	Venue and date to be confirmed
Regional seminar on migration	Mexico (Venue and date to be confirmed)
Regional seminar for Latin American and Caribbean Parliaments on the financial inclusion of women	Mexico (Venue and date to be confirmed)
IPU-UNISDR sub-regional seminar for Northeast Asia on disaster risk reduction and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	SEOUL (Republic of Korea) (Dates to be confirmed)
138 th Assembly and related meetings	GENEVA (Switzerland) 24-28 March 2018
Regional seminar on the SDGs for the parliaments of Eastern and Central Europe and Central Asia	BELGRADE (Serbia) 2018 (Dates to be confirmed)
Third South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the SDGs	Sri Lanka 2018 (Date to be confirmed)

Agenda of the 137th Assembly

(St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 14-18 October 2017)

1. Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the 137th Assembly
2. Consideration of requests for the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda
3. General Debate
4. Sharing our diversity: The 20th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy
(Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights)
5. Reports of the Standing Committees on Peace and International Security; Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade; and United Nations Affairs
6. Approval of the subject item for the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights at the 139th IPU Assembly and appointment of the Rapporteurs

Decisions concerning the Human Rights of Parliamentarians

VENEZUELA

- VEN/10 - Biagio Pilieri
- VEN/11 - José Sánchez Montiel
- VEN/12 - Hernán Claret Alemán
- VEN/13 - Richard Blanco Cabrera

- VEN/14 - Richard Mardo
- VEN/15 - Gustavo Marcano
- VEN/16 - Julio Borges
- VEN/17 - Juan Carlos Caldera
- VEN/18 - María Corina Machado (Ms.)
- VEN/19 - Nora Bracho (Ms.)
- VEN/20 - Ismael García
- VEN/21 - Eduardo Gómez Sigala
- VEN/22 - William Dávila
- VEN/23 - María Mercedes Aranguren (Ms.)

- VEN/24 - Nirma Guarulla (Ms.)
- VEN/25 - Julio Ygarza
- VEN/26 - Romel Guzamana

- VEN/27 - Rosmit Mantilla
- VEN/28 - Enzo Prieto
- VEN/29 - Gilberto Sojo

- VEN/30 - Gilber Caro

- VEN/31 - Luis Florido
- VEN/32 - Eudoro González

***Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)***

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Referring to the existing cases under file name VEN/10-23, which concern allegations of human rights violations affecting members from the coalition of the former opposition, the Democratic Unity Round Table (MUD), in the previous Venezuelan legislature, and the decision adopted on their cases by the Governing Council at its 199th session (October 2016); *noting* that of these members, Mr. Pilieri, Mr. Sánchez, Mr. Alemán, Mr. Blanco, Mr. Borges, Ms. Bracho, Mr. García and Mr. Dávila were re-elected in the parliamentary elections of 6 December 2015, in which the MUD obtained a majority of seats; *referring also* to the existing cases under file name VEN/24-29, which concern parliamentarians from the MUD who were elected for the first time in 2015,

Having before it the new cases of Mr. Gilber Caro, Mr. Eudoro Gonzalez and Mr. Luis Florido, who were elected in 2015, which have been examined by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians pursuant to the Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints (Annex I of the Revised Rules and Practices),

Considering the information regularly provided by the complainant and by parliamentarians belonging to the MUD and during the hearing with the Committee on 3 April 2017,

Considering the letter of 12 March 2017 from Mr. Darío Vivas Velazco, member of the Venezuelan National Assembly and Coordinator of the Venezuelan parliamentary group *Bloque de la Patria* in the Latin American Parliament, and the information he provided at the hearing with the Committee on 3 April 2017; *also considering* the multiple contacts with the IPU Secretary General and the IPU Secretariat have had with the Venezuelan Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva,

Recalling the following information on file with regard to the previous cases:

- **Mr. Pilieri, Mr. Sánchez, Mr. Alemán and Mr. Blanco**
 - The four men have been exercising their parliamentary mandate, but remain subject to criminal proceedings. According to the complainant, the proceedings are baseless, which the authorities deny. They were instigated before their election to the National Assembly in September 2010, at which time Mr. Pilieri and Mr. Sánchez were detained. They were released in February and December 2011, respectively;
- **Mr. Richard Mardo**
 - On 5 February 2013, Mr. Diosdado Cabello, then Speaker of the National Assembly, reportedly displayed, in the course of an ordinary session, public documents and cheques to support the hypothesis that Mr. Mardo had benefited from third-party donations, arguing that this amounted to illicit enrichment. The complainant affirms that what the Speaker displayed were falsified cheques and forged receipts;
 - On 12 March 2013, the Prosecutor General's Office formally requested the Supreme Court to authorize proceedings against Mr. Mardo on charges of tax fraud and money laundering, following accusations that were levelled against him by the then Speaker of the National Assembly which, according to the complainant, were based on falsified cheques and forged receipts. According to the authorities, Mr. Mardo was officially charged on 25 June 2014;
 - There is no information on file to show that the authorities have advanced with the criminal proceedings;
- **Ms. María Mercedes Aranguren**
 - On 12 November 2013, the National Assembly lifted Ms. Aranguren's parliamentary immunity so as to allow charges of corruption and criminal association to be filed in court. The complainant affirms that the case against Ms. Aranguren is not only baseless, but had been dormant since 2008 and was only reactivated in 2013 in order to pass the enabling legislation. The authorities stated that, on 10 December 2014, the court in charge of the case ordered her arrest;
 - There is no information on file to show that the authorities have advanced with the criminal proceedings;
- **Ms. María Corina Machado**
 - On 24 March 2014, the Speaker of the National Assembly announced, without any discussion in plenary, that Ms. Machado had been stripped of her mandate after the Government of Panama had accredited her as an alternate representative at the March 2014 meeting of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, DC, so as to allow her to present her account of the situation in Venezuela;
 - Two criminal investigations were subsequently initiated against her. The complainant states that the investigations relate to allegations that she was accused of involvement in an alleged plot to carry out a coup d'état and assassinations and of incitement to violence. Ms. Machado has denied the accusations and charges against her. On 3 December 2014, formal charges were reportedly brought by the Prosecutor's Office. No information is on file with regard to the current status of proceedings;
 - On 14 July 2015, the Comptroller General of the Republic fined Ms. Machado and suspended her from her duties for 12 months, thereby blocking her intention to stand in the parliamentary elections of December 2015 for a further term as a member of the National Assembly. According to the complainant, the suspension was totally disproportionate and unconstitutional and a violation of human rights;
- **Mr. Juan Carlos Caldera**
 - On 26 November 2014, the Supreme Court authorized Mr. Caldera's prosecution, referring to article 380 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The complainant claims that, contrary to the Court's ruling, the acts for which Mr. Caldera is to be investigated are not crimes. The complainant states that an illegal audio recording emerged showing several persons plotting to frame Mr. Caldera by making a lawful act – the receipt of private funds for a mayoral election campaign – appear criminal in the eyes of the public. The complainant points out that, in Venezuela, public funding of political parties and election campaigns is prohibited;

- **Mr. Ismael García**
 - In November 2014, the Supreme Court upheld a request for pretrial proceedings in the case brought against Mr. García by General Carvajal, who claims to have been defamed and is currently being held in Aruba at the request of the United States Government on accusations of drug trafficking. The complainant points out that Mr. García had formally requested the Prosecutor General's Office to investigate General Carvajal for his alleged role in criminal activity. According to the complainant, none of these facts was considered by the Supreme Court before upholding the request;
- **Ms. Nirma Guarulla, Mr. Julio Ygarza and Mr. Romel Guzamana**
 - On 30 December 2015, the Electoral Chamber of the Supreme Court ordered the suspension of a number of acts of proclamation issued by the Electoral Council for the State of Amazonas. The judgement related to allegations of fraud during the election of Ms. Guarulla, Mr. Ygarza and Mr. Guzamana (all from the coalition of the former opposition, the MUD) and Mr. Miguel Tadeo (from the PSUV). The suspension has the effect of reducing the two-thirds majority that the “opposition”, now majority, would have had in the National Assembly to take certain important decisions, and is therefore of particular significance;
 - On 5 January 2016, the National Assembly decided to disregard this judgement and that the deputies from Amazonas should take their seats, although Mr. Tadeo from the PSUV chose to respect the court order. On 11 January 2016, the Supreme Court determined that any decision taken by the National Assembly would be invalid as long as the members of parliament whom the Court had suspended remained in their seats. The MUD coalition parties in parliament first decided to continue legislating in defiance of the court ruling but, on 13 January 2016, the suspended members requested to leave the legislature “without losing their status of members of parliament and in expectation of more favourable conditions in resuming their seats”;
 - On 21 July 2016, the suspended members of parliament from the State of Amazonas decided to retake their seats at the National Assembly, despite the Supreme Court’s earlier decision to suspend their election;
 - On 1 August 2016, the Supreme Court declared again that any decision taken by the National Assembly would be invalid as long as the members of parliament remained in their seats, and declared that the suspended members of parliament and the opposition (new majority) members of parliament were in contempt of court, and therefore could be liable to criminal prosecution;
 - As a result of this continued contempt, since August 2016 the President of Venezuela has deprived the National Assembly of its funds to function, including salaries for its members and monies needed to cover its running costs;
 - The complainant has repeatedly reiterated concerns about the lack of independence of the Supreme Court. In particular, 13 of its judges and 21 substitute judges of the Court, some of whom had close affinity with, if not direct ties to, the governing party, were elected hastily by the outgoing National Assembly within one month after the 6 December 2015 elections had eliminated the governing party’s majority in the newly elected National Assembly, which would take office on 5 January 2016;
- **Mr. Rosmit Mantilla, Mr. Enzo Prieto and Mr. Gilberto Sojo**
 - Mr. Mantilla, Mr. Prieto and Mr. Sojo, elected as alternate members of parliament in the parliamentary elections of 6 December 2015, have been deprived of their liberty since 2014 in connection with ongoing legal proceedings, according to the complainant for political reasons, and have therefore been unable to exercise their parliamentary mandate;
 - Mr. Mantilla was released on 17 November 2016 and took office as a parliamentarian on 22 November 2016. The legal case against him, however, continues and has reached the trial stage and Mr. Mantilla has to report regularly to the authorities. Mr. Sojo was released on 13 December 2016 and subsequently sworn in as a member of parliament. The legal case against him is, however, still pending;
- **The new case of Mr. Gilbert Caro**
 - The complainant states that, on 11 January 2017, officers from the Bolivarian Intelligence Service (SEBIN) arbitrarily arrested and detained Mr. Caro, who is still being held at the detention centre “26 de julio” in San Juan de los Moros in Guárico State. The complainant

claims that Mr. Caro is to be tried by a military court, which contravenes articles 28, 49 and 261 of the Venezuelan Constitution, and that he has not been presented in due time before a judge;

- **The new cases of Mr. Luis Florido and Mr. Eudoro González and new developments concerning Mr. William Dávila**
- Mr. Florido, President of the National Assembly's Committee on Foreign Relations, Sovereignty and Integration, returned to Venezuela on 27 January 2017 after carrying out parliamentary duties abroad. Upon his return, immigration officers confiscated his passport, informing him that the document had been cancelled owing to a reported official complaint of theft of the said document. On 6 February 2017, Mr. Florido was ready to travel abroad, using this time his ID card, which suffices for travel between Mercosur Member States, when he was told that he was subject to an order prohibiting him from leaving the country. On 7 February 2017, Mr. Dávila who was about to travel abroad, was likewise informed by immigration officers that his passport had been reported as stolen and therefore cancelled. Similarly, on 21 March 2017, Mr. González returned to Venezuela when immigration officers told him that his passport had been cancelled owing to a reported official complaint of theft of the said document;
- In all three cases, the complainant affirms that no official complaint about the theft of the passports was ever made. It considers that the measures against the three parliamentarians are arbitrary and have no basis in law, being merely meant to harass and silence parliamentarians wishing to participate in international forums to voice their criticism of the political situation in Venezuela,

Recalling that a delegation of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was due to travel to Venezuela in June 2013 to address, among other things, the issues that had by then arisen in the cases, but that the mission was postponed at the last minute in order to allow the parliamentary authorities more time to organize the meetings requested,

Taking into account the numerous letters from the current Speaker of the National Assembly and his immediate predecessor, including his letter of 17 October 2016, in which he expressed full support for the mission by the Committee and underscored the need for it to take place as soon as possible, all the more so in light of his concerns about increased encroachment by the executive and judicial authorities on the powers of the National Assembly,

Considering that the mission, which was due to travel to Venezuela from 20 to 22 March 2017, was cancelled at the last minute after receiving the letter addressed to the IPU Secretary General by Mr. Darío Vivas Velazco, member of the Venezuelan National Assembly and Coordinator of the Venezuelan parliamentary group *Bloque de la Patria* in the Latin American Parliament, and the refusal to provide a visa to the one member of the mission requiring it; *considering also* that in his letter, Mr. Darío Vivas states that "the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been welcomed in our country on previous occasions, including during His Excellency's successful visit in 2016. However, the National Assembly is currently acting outside the bounds of its constitutional functions; thus, it is not authorized to represent the Legislative Power before international organizations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union" and that for the *Bloque de la Patria* therefore "the legal, political and practical conditions required for the proper conduct of a visit by the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians cannot be met as they might have been in different circumstances",

Recalling the official visit to Venezuela by the Secretary General in late July 2016, during which he met, amongst others, with the President of Venezuela, the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Ombudsman and parliamentarians from majority and opposition parties, and that his visit laid the groundwork for the organization of the planned mission by the Committee; *further recalling* the report by the Secretary General on his mission to the Committee in October 2016; and *considering* his report to the Committee at its current session,

Recalling that from May 2016 to February 2017 efforts were made, with mediation by the Secretary General of UNASUR, the former Prime Minister of Spain and the former Presidents of the Dominican Republic and Panama, and later the Vatican, to bring the two political sides together, which led to official plenary meetings on 30 October 2016 and 11 and 12 November 2016 to decide on the issues for the political dialogue. However, the dialogue stalled subsequently, in light of disagreements about what had been concluded thus far and how to proceed,

Considering that, on 29 March 2017, the Supreme Court decided to assume the powers of the National Assembly temporarily, considering that the latter remained in contempt of its rulings. According to Mr. Darío Vivas, following an urgent meeting of the National Council of Defence, the Supreme Court swiftly reversed its decision. The text of this decision appears to be unavailable as of yet,

1. *Deeply* regrets that, despite the agreement of the Speaker of the National Assembly, the governing party did not welcome the mission at this point in time and that the visa was refused to one of its members, all the more so as it remains convinced that in the cases at hand, against the backdrop of the current political crisis, such a mission could help address the concerns and questions that have arisen thus far; *hopes therefore* that the mission can still take place soon;
2. *Is deeply concerned* about the continued suspension of four members of the National Assembly; *reaffirms* that this situation not only directly affects their individual political rights, but also deprives their constituencies of representation in parliament; *fails to understand* why these parliamentarians should not be allowed to exercise their parliamentary mandate, in particular to attend parliamentary sessions, as this would be in line with the fundamental principle of presumption of innocence; *fails to understand also* how, on a matter of such importance, it is possible that the Supreme Court has not yet issued a ruling, sixteen months after the elections; *calls on* the Supreme Court to do so as a matter of urgency, with due consideration of all the facts and with full respect for the right to defence of those concerned;
3. *Considers* that the subsequent rulings by the Supreme Court declaring all decisions by the National Assembly to be null and void for as long as the parliamentarians remain involved in the work of parliament to be grossly excessive;
4. *Is deeply concerned* that, as a result of this situation, the National Assembly as a whole and its members have been deprived of the financial means to which they are entitled to carry out their work, thereby seriously undermining the effectiveness of parliament; *urges* the relevant authorities to remedy this situation speedily; *stresses* at the same time the need for the various branches of State to act within their constitutionally prescribed mandate and prerogatives;
5. *Recognizes* that the issue relating to the suspension of the four members of the National Assembly is part of a larger political crisis in Venezuela, which can only be solved through political dialogue; *calls on* both sides to act in good faith and to commit fully to restarting the political dialogue with the assistance of the official mediators; *reaffirms* that the IPU stands ready to assist with these mediation efforts; and *wishes* to receive further official information about how this assistance can best be provided;
6. *Is pleased* that Mr. Mantilla and Mr. Sojo were released; *wishes to know* more about the prospect of Mr. Prieto being released soon and thus being allowed to carry out his parliamentary mandate; *wishes* to have full details of the legal grounds and facts that underpin the accusations against him and the stage reached in the legal proceedings;
7. *Recalls* its previous questions, as well as earlier preliminary concerns, regarding the cases of the other current and former parliamentarians whose cases were already under examination by the Committee before the elections of December 2015, and which relate primarily to the legal and factual justifications for the legal proceedings brought against them individually and for the lifting of their parliamentary immunity;
8. *Is deeply concerned* that the passports of Mr. González, Mr. Flores and Mr. Dávila were cancelled, apparently without any serious justification; *cannot but conclude* that this supports the allegations that the cancellation is in fact a reprisal for their political and parliamentary work, and is meant to prevent them from speaking about the situation in Venezuela in international forums; *urges* the relevant authorities to return the passports as a matter of urgency and to prevent these incidents from recurring;
9. *Notes* the allegations regarding Mr. Caro, in particular the alleged lack of respect for his parliamentary immunity and the possibility that he will be tried by a military court; *wishes* to receive official information on these points and on the exact accusations against him and the facts underpinning them;

10. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
11. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.

BANGLADESH

BGL/14 - Shah Ams Kibria

*Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)*

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Referring to the case of Mr. Shah Ams Kibria, a member of the Parliament of Bangladesh who was assassinated in a grenade attack in January 2005, and to the decision adopted at its 197th session (October 2015),

Taking into account the letter from the parliamentary authorities, dated 26 October 2016, the information provided at the hearing held with the Deputy Speaker and another member of the Parliament of Bangladesh during the 136th IPU Assembly, as well as the information provided by the complainants and other sources of information,

Recalling, among the extensive information on file, the following:

- The initial inquiry into the assassination proved to be an attempt by the investigating officers to divert the course of justice. Since the re-opening of the investigation in March 2007, Islamist militants belonging to the Horkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji), including its leader Mr. Mufti Hannan Munshi, have been implicated. According to the March 2010 report of the Ministry of Home Affairs, several persons have been arrested, including the two who detonated the grenades (Mr. Mizanur Rahman Mithu and Mr. Md Badrul Alam Mizan). In addition, the former State Minister for Home Affairs, Mr. Lutfozzaman Babar, stands accused of harbouring and protecting the individuals who threw the grenades;
- According to the parliamentary authorities, the investigation found that a Kashmir-based Islamic militant organization led by Mr. Abdul Mazid Butt had helped Mr. Mufti Abdul Hannan and Mr. Moulana Tajuddin, Huji leader in Bangladesh, transport Arges grenades from Pakistan to Bangladesh with the intent to commit assassinations in different parts of the country. Further investigation also revealed that some of the accused had been present when the grenades were thrown at Mr. Kibria;
- On 20 June 2011, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted a supplementary charge sheet against 14 other persons, with the request that the court rule on their status;
- Mr. Kibria's family objected to the charge sheet and filed a no-confidence motion on the grounds that it was, in its view, incomplete and, among other concerns, failed to identify all the individuals involved in the assassination, in particular the real masterminds of the murder. The family further expressed concern that, unless further investigations were conducted, the evidence was unlikely to hold up in court, as it had been drawn largely from interrogations conducted in prison and the accused would claim that they had been obtained under duress. The family also remained concerned about persisting political interference in the investigations and about the fact that it was not kept regularly informed of new developments and that its proposals to help advance the investigation had been disregarded;
- In January 2012, the judge granted the family's motion and ordered further investigations to be carried out. The newly assigned investigating officer visited Mrs. Kibria and indicated that she would remain in regular contact with the family as the third investigation proceeded;
- A third investigation was initiated. The investigating officer reviewed past case records and obtained testimony from 93 witnesses. This resulted in the identification and arrest of new suspects. A new charge sheet was submitted in December 2014 against 35 individuals. This

third charge sheet was transferred to the Speedy Trial Tribunal in June 2015 and confirmed on 13 September 2015. Trial proceedings are still under way, with a total of 171 witnesses expected to provide testimony;

- According to the authorities, the new suspects identified include Mr. Harris Chowdhury (the political adviser of the then Prime Minister Khaleda Zia – Mr. Chowdhury appears to also have been involved in the August 2004 attack against the then leader of the opposition and current Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina), who is suspected of having planned the assassination. Mr. Harris Chowdhury, as well as two other suspects identified in the latest charge sheet, has absconded. The Bangladeshi authorities confirmed that they informed Interpol so that it could take necessary action and that a red notice has been issued against Mr. Harris Chowdhury;
- According to one of the complainants, in the past few years Mr. Kibria's family had stopped receiving regular updates on the investigation. The complainant observes that this lack of information, coupled with the long history of political interference, complications and delays in the investigation, has resulted in a loss of confidence in the judicial process on the part of Mr. Kibria's family. The family did not contest the third charge sheet, as it had done in the two earlier ones, because of this loss of confidence. The family reportedly continues to believe that other individuals involved in the crime, particularly the potential instigators, have not yet been charged due to political interference and consider that justice delayed is justice denied;
- During the hearing conducted at the 132nd IPU Assembly (Hanoi, March 2015), the Deputy Speaker of the Bangladeshi Parliament stated that the case was now on the right track, that the Bangladeshi authorities were committed to completing the judicial proceedings quickly and that he was confident that quick progress would be made towards resolving the case. He observed that the delays in the investigation were initially caused by political factors. He fully acknowledged that justice delayed was justice denied and emphasized that transparency in the proceedings and due process were essential to ensure a satisfactory outcome. He was not aware that Mr. Kibria's family had not been informed of recent investigative steps and observed that it was normally a matter of routine for investigators to keep the families informed. He further pledged to convey a copy of the new charge sheet when made public, once it had been confirmed by the court, as well as continue to convey information on any new developments in the proceedings;
- The parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Home Affairs has continued to monitor the case,

Considering that, during the hearing conducted at the 136th IPU Assembly (Dhaka, April 2017), the Deputy Speaker of the Bangladeshi Parliament reaffirmed that judicial proceedings in Bangladesh take time, and that the delays in the investigation were largely caused by the defendants and by the family when it contested the previous charge sheets. The trials were now ongoing in two separate proceedings running in parallel (assassination case and explosives case). It was taking time due to the need for the judges to hear every single witness in person and to allow the parties to cross-examine them. Great care was being taken to respect all rules of criminal procedure and the rights to defence, as the case was politically sensitive. A number of suspects were senior officials of the current opposition party and, if the court rushed the process and was not sufficiently transparent, the opposition would say that it was a political conspiracy. The court was therefore closely scrutinizing the evidence provided so as to ensure fair process. Forty-three witnesses had been examined by the court to date and the next hearing was scheduled to take place on 29 March 2017,

Bearing in mind the striking similarities between the grenade attack against Mr. Kibria and that against Sheikh Hasina and others five months earlier, with both attacks targeting key members of the opposition at the time and using the same type of grenade. In both cases, the investigation has revealed an alleged conspiracy between members of the then ruling party and Islamist extremists. In this respect, several of the persons charged stand accused in both cases, including several members of the current opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and leaders of Harkat-ul-Jihad al Islami,

Also bearing in mind that article 35 of the Bangladeshi Constitution provides that “every person accused of a criminal offence shall have the right to a speedy and public trial by an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by law”. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) – to which Bangladesh is a party – also affirms the right to be tried without undue delay. At its universal periodic review (UPR) before the United Nations Human Rights Council, Bangladesh accepted recommendations made to end impunity and to take necessary measures to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations are prosecuted,

1. *Thanks* the Deputy Speaker for the information provided during the hearing; however, *reaffirms its wish* to receive more detailed information in writing on a regular basis on developments in the ongoing trial proceedings; *regrets* that such information has not been forthcoming and that neither the parliamentary authorities, nor the Attorney General, have yet responded regarding the long-standing proposed trial-observation mission; *reiterates its wish* to receive a copy of the latest charge sheet, as well as further information on the grounds and evidence supporting the charges against the suspects;
2. *Notes* that the proceedings are still under way and that they are making slow progress; *takes note* of the reasons given by the parliamentary authorities in this respect;
3. *Remains deeply concerned* that, more than 12 years after the attack, none of the perpetrators has yet been held responsible in a court of law; *reiterates* that justice delayed is justice denied; and *hopes* that the trial will proceed swiftly and that further progress will promptly be made towards ensuring full accountability for this serious crime, in conformity with national and international standards of fair trial, including those regarding the application of capital punishment, and without any political interference;
4. *Is worried about* the lack of fairness of and loss of confidence in the current proceedings, including by Mr. Kibria's family, as well as about the strong suspicions of the politicization of the judiciary;
5. *Notes with deep concern* that Mr. Kibria's family and lawyers have claimed for several years now that they have not been kept informed of progress made in the investigation or in the trial proceedings, including dates of hearings scheduled by the court, but that the authorities continue to claim the contrary; *urges once more* the relevant authorities to take all appropriate measures immediately to ensure that the family is regularly and fully informed of all judicial developments and therefore able to participate meaningfully in the ongoing proceedings to ensure transparency in the ongoing judicial proceedings and accountability for the crimes;
6. *Notes with concern* that several suspects remain at large and takes note of the efforts undertaken by the authorities to apprehend them; *wishes* to be kept informed of progress in this regard;
7. *Notes with appreciation* that the Parliament of Bangladesh continues to monitor the case; *expects* it to convey its concerns and requests for information to the relevant executive and judicial authorities; and *trusts* that it will continue to keep the Committee regularly apprised of any significant developments and of the responses provided by all relevant authorities;
8. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
9. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.

BANGLADESH

BGL/15 - Sheikh Hasina

Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session (Dhaka, 5 April 2017)

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Referring to the case of Sheikh Hasina, leader of the opposition at the time the communication was submitted, and current Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and to the decision adopted at its 197th session (October 2015),

Taking into account the letter from the parliamentary authorities dated 26 October 2016, the letter from the Principal Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office dated 12 December 2016, the hearing held with the Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Bangladesh and another member of parliament during the 136th IPU Assembly, as well as the information provided by the complainants and other sources of information,

Recalling, among the extensive information on file, the following:

- On 21 August 2004, a well-planned grenade attack was launched against Sheikh Hasina, resulting in her injury, as well as the death and injury of scores of other individuals;
- The initial investigation into the attack led to the arrest of 30 suspects, three of whom made statements confessing to their participation in the attack, which were later found to be false and fabricated;
- A subsequent investigation into the attack revealed the following: the attack was carried out by Islamist militants belonging to Horkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji), several of whom, including its leader Mufti Hannan Munshi, were arrested in connection with the case. Upon interrogation, the assailants disclosed the involvement of government officials who, upon further investigation, were found to have provided administrative and financial support for the attack, including involvement in its planning and in helping facilitate the escape of some of the perpetrators;
- After the deadline for submitting the final investigation report had been extended many times, on 2 July 2011 the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted a supplementary charge sheet and formally indicted, on 18 March 2012, 30 more persons, including Mr. Lutfozzaman Babar (State Minister of Home Affairs), Mr. Abdus Salam Pinto (Deputy Minister, whose brother, Mr. Moulana Mohammad Tajuddin, had supplied the grenades used in the attack), Mr. Ali Ahsan Mohammed Mujahid (Secretary General of Jamaat E Islami Bangladesh), Mr. Tarek Rahman (Senior Vice-President of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia) and Mr. Harris Chowdhury (Political Adviser to Khaleda Zia), who were charged under sections 34, 109, 118, 119, 120(b), 201, 212, 217, 218, 302, 307, 324, 326, and 330 of the Criminal Code and sections 3, 4 and 6 of the Explosive Substances Act. Former heads of intelligence and the police were also named in the charge sheet. Further investigations also found that Mr. Abdus Salam Pinto, Mr. Lutfozzaman Babar and Mr. Tarek Rahman had assured the perpetrators that they would provide the necessary administrative help to carry out the attack, with Mr. Babar guaranteeing that security measures would be managed in such a way to enable the assailants to carry out the attack freely. Seven of the indicted individuals were also found to have diverted the course of justice with respect to the initial investigation in order to shield the true perpetrators;
- A total of 52 suspects have been charged. As of March 2017, eight had been granted bail and 18 had fled abroad to evade justice;
- According to the authorities, one absconded suspect, Mr. Abu Bakar (aka Hafej Salim Hawlader), had been arrested and referred to the court. Red notices had been issued against Mr. Tarek Rahman, Mr. Al Haj Moulana Mohammad Tajuddin Mia, Mr. Harris Chowdhury, Mr. Kazi Shah Mofazzal Hossen Kaykobad and Mr. Ratul Ahammed Babu, with red notices for other absconded individuals currently being processed;
- The trial has been under way since 2012. A total of 491 witnesses are scheduled to provide testimony. Approximately 100 witnesses appeared before the court in 2014, 90 in 2015 and 20 in 2016, according to the information provided by the authorities. The trial has been progressing slowly;
- The Deputy Speaker stated, during a hearing held at the 132nd IPU Assembly (Hanoi, March 2015), that the case was on the right track and that the Government was committed to completing the trial quickly. He fully acknowledged that justice delayed was justice denied and emphasized that transparency in the proceedings and due process were essential to ensure a satisfactory outcome. He stated that, even without hearing the full roster of witnesses, the case could advance and reach its conclusion if the prosecution and the court agreed that sufficient evidence had been received. The attack and the circumstances contributing to the long delays in the investigation and trial were influenced by political factors. The case had also been impeded by procedural challenges filed by the defence lawyers with the intention of delaying the pursuit of justice. The Bangladeshi Government was in discussions with the authorities of the United Kingdom to facilitate the extradition of Mr. Tarek Rahman;
- The Parliament's Standing Committee on the Ministry of Home Affairs has continued to monitor the case,

Recalling that, according to one of the complainants, the trial proceedings have been excessively slow, with only a fraction of the individuals registered to provide depositions having had their testimonies processed, and without any indication that the procedure would be completed any time soon. This slow progress in the trial, as well as an apparent lack of serious effort to locate and arrest the absconded suspects, had contributed to a deterioration in confidence in the proceedings and in the judicial system,

Considering that, in the letter of October 2016, and during the hearing conducted during the 136th IPU Assembly, the parliamentary authorities indicated the following:

- 224 witnesses out of a total of 491 witnesses have provided testimony to date. The most recent hearings were scheduled to take place on 20 and 21 March 2017 to cross-examine witness No. 225. With the exception of two remaining accused, all the other accused had already completed their cross-examination of this witness;
- Mr. Kazi Shah Mofazzal Hossen Kaykobad, one of the absconding suspects against whom a red notice had been issued, has been arrested in the United Arab Emirates and efforts were currently underway to secure his extradition to Bangladesh;
- Great care was being taken to respect all rules of criminal procedure and the rights to defence, as the case was politically sensitive. A number of suspects were senior officials of the current opposition party. If the court rushed the process and was not sufficiently transparent, the opposition would say that it was a political conspiracy. The court was therefore closely scrutinizing the evidence provided so as to ensure fair process,

Bearing in mind the striking similarities between the grenade attack against Mr. Kibria and that against Sheikh Hasina and others five months earlier, with both attacks targeting key members of the opposition at the time and using the same type of grenade. In both cases, the investigation has revealed an alleged conspiracy between members of the then ruling party and Islamist extremists. In this respect, several of the persons charged stand accused in both cases, including several members of the current opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and three Harkat-ul-Jihad al Islami leaders,

Also bearing in mind that article 35 of the Bangladeshi Constitution provides that “every person accused of a criminal offence shall have the right to a speedy and public trial by an independent and impartial court or tribunal established by law”. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) – to which Bangladesh is a party – also affirms the right to be tried without undue delay. At its universal periodic review (UPR) before the United Nations Human Rights Council, Bangladesh accepted recommendations made to end impunity and to take necessary measures to ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations are prosecuted,

1. *Thanks* the Deputy Speaker for the information provided during the hearing; however, *reaffirms its wish* to receive more detailed information in writing on a regular basis on developments in the ongoing trial proceedings; *regrets* that such information has not been forthcoming and that neither the parliamentary authorities, nor the Attorney General, have yet responded regarding the long-standing proposed trial-observation mission;
2. *Notes* that the proceedings are still under way and that they are making slow progress; *takes note* of the reasons given by the parliamentary authorities in this respect;
3. *Remains deeply concerned* that, more than 12 years after the attack, none of the perpetrators has yet been held responsible in a court of law; *reiterates* that justice delayed is justice denied and *hopes* that the trial will proceed swiftly and that further progress will promptly be made towards ensuring full accountability for this serious crime, in conformity with national and international standards of fair trial, including those regarding the application of capital punishment, and without any political interference;
4. *Is worried about* the lack of fairness of and loss of confidence in the proceedings, as well as about the strong suspicions of the politicization of the judiciary;
5. *Notes with concern* that several suspects remain at large and takes note of the efforts undertaken by the authorities to apprehend them; *wishes* to be kept informed of progress in this regard;
6. *Notes with appreciation* that the Parliament of Bangladesh continues to monitor the case; *expects it* to convey its concerns and requests for information to the relevant executive and judicial authorities; and *trusts* that it will continue to keep the Committee regularly apprised of any significant developments and of the responses provided by all relevant authorities;
7. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the parliamentary authorities, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
8. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.

CAMBODIA

CMBD/27- Chan Cheng

CMBD/48 - Mu Sochua (Ms.)

CMBD/49 - Keo Phirum

CMBD/50 - Ho Van

CMBD/51 - Long Ry

CMBD/52 - Nut Romdoul

CMBD/53 - Men Sothavarin

CMBD/54 - Real Khemarin

CMBD/55 - Sok Hour Hong

CMBD/56 - Kong Sophea

CMBD/57 - Nhay Chamroeun

CMBD/58 - Sam Rainsy

CMBD/59 - Um Sam An

CMBD/60 - Kem Sokha

CMBD/61 - Thak Lany (Ms.)

***Decision adopted by consensus by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session
(Dhaka, 5 April 2017)¹***

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Referring to the cases of the following 15 parliamentarians from the opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP), who are all long-standing and prominent members of the CNRP leadership, Mr. Chan Cheng, Ms. Mu Sochua, Mr. Keo Phirum, Mr. Ho Van, Mr. Long Ry, Mr. Nut Romdoul, Mr. Men Sothavarin, Mr. Real Khemarin, Mr. Sok Hour Hong, Mr. Kong Sophea, Mr. Nhay Chamroeun, Mr. Sam Rainsy, Mr. Um Sam An, Mr. Kem Sokha and Ms. Thak Lany, and the decision adopted at its 199th session (October 2016, Geneva),

Referring to the hearings held with the Cambodian delegation to the 136th IPU Assembly and with Ms Saumura Tioulong on behalf of the CNRP,

Referring to the final report on the visit of the Committee conducted to Cambodia in February 2016 (CL/199/11(b)-R.1),

Recalling the letters dated 11 July and 11 October 2016 of the Secretary General of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, the information submitted by the complainants and reliable third parties, as well as the hearings conducted with the Cambodian delegation and the complainants at the 135th IPU Assembly (October 2016, Geneva),

Taking into account that the complainants' claim that the cases under examination demonstrate that the ruling party is attempting to weaken, silence and exclude the opposition in the lead-up to the upcoming 2017 and 2018 local and national elections by various means, including: (i) acts of intimidation and pressure; (ii) physical violence against members of parliament; (iii) political and judicial harassment characterized by the multiplication of groundless criminal prosecutions, unfair trials and court convictions, as well as charges kept dangling to maintain a permanent threat of arrest; (iv) exclusion from political participation and from entry into Cambodia of the former leader of the opposition; and (v) threats of suspension and dissolution of the CNRP and of a future ban on the political activities of its newly designated leadership pursuant to the recently passed amendments to the 1997 political party law,

Recalling the following information already on file on the individual situation of the 15 members of parliament whose cases have been referred to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians since July 2014:

¹ The delegation of Cambodia expressed its reservations regarding the decision.

- **Mr. Chan Cheng**, a member of the National Assembly, was convicted to two years' imprisonment on 13 March 2015. His parliamentary immunity has not been lifted by the current legislature. He is free, pending the final decision of the appeals court. The appeal has been pending for two years. The long-dormant proceedings, which were believed to have been dismissed in 2012, were suddenly re-activated in mid-2014 amid a tense political standoff between the ruling and opposition parties relating to the contesting of the 2013 election results;
- **Ms. Mu Sochua, Mr. Keo Phirum, Mr. Ho Van, Mr. Long Ry, Mr. Nut Romdoul, Mr. Men Sothavarin and Mr. Real Khemarin**, all members of the National Assembly, were arrested on 15 July 2014, with other opposition activists, after a demonstration calling for the reopening of the Phnom Penh protest site known as Freedom Park (or Democracy Plaza) had turned violent. They were charged as criminal instigators by a Phnom Penh court for leading an insurrectional movement, committing aggravated intentional violence and inciting others to commit an offence, and face up to 30 years in prison. The Committee received clear video evidence that the members of parliament had tried to prevent and stop the violence (although protesters did not listen to them), while no evidence has been submitted to prove their alleged direct involvement in the violence, or that the violence was consistent with what legally constituted the crime of insurrection. The members of parliament concerned were released on bail on 22 July 2014, after the announcement of a political agreement between the Government and the opposition to end the political crisis. The charges, however, remain pending against them. A confidential judicial investigation is still ongoing and no date has been set for a trial almost three years after the protest in question;
- **Mr. Sok Hour Hong**, a senator, was arrested and charged after a video clip was posted on the Facebook page of the leader of the opposition, Mr. Sam Rainsy, on 12 August 2015. The video clip featured Mr. Hong Sok Hour discussing his views about the Viet Nam-Cambodia border, a controversial and sensitive issue in Cambodia, and showing a copy of an article of a 1979 Viet Nam-Cambodia treaty, providing that the border would be dissolved and re-delineated, which proved to be incorrect. On 13 August 2015, the Prime Minister of Cambodia accused the senator of treason and ordered his arrest. The senator was subsequently detained on 15 August 2015 and charged with forging a public document, using a forged public document and inciting social disorder. His immunity was not lifted because the authorities considered that he had been arrested in flagrante delicto;
- **Mr. Kong Sophea and Mr. Nhay Chamroeun**, members of the National Assembly, were dragged from their cars and violently beaten as they were leaving the National Assembly on 26 October 2015. An anti-opposition protest organized by the ruling party was in progress in front of the National Assembly at that time. Neither security officers of the National Assembly, nor police officers present, took any action before, during or after the assault, as shown on video clips of the incident. The assault left both members of parliament with significant injuries. The attack was condemned by the National Assembly and an investigation was initiated, leading to the arrest of three suspects in November 2015, after they reportedly confessed to being involved in the violence. No further action has been taken against the other assailants or the instigator(s), despite complaints lodged by the members of parliament concerned to that end and clear video records of the assault showing the identity of the attackers and the fact that they were communicating to others through walkie-talkies. The international NGO, Human Rights Watch (HRW), conducted thorough investigations into the incident and concluded, in a report published in May 2016, that the trial was designed to cover up ultimate responsibility for the crime, rather than uncover it;
- **Mr. Sam Rainsy**, the then leader of the opposition and a member of the National Assembly, has been targeted by an ever-increasing number of court cases initiated against him since November 2015 (including one related to the case of Senator Sok Hour Hong for posting the video clip on his Facebook page). His immunity was not lifted, but his parliamentary mandate was revoked in connection with the first defamation court case. He went into exile in November 2015 to avoid imprisonment. On 18 October 2016, the Prime Minister issued a ban to prevent Mr. Sam Rainsy from returning to Cambodia after the latter announced his wish to return from exile to participate in the upcoming elections;
- **Mr. Um Sam An**, a member of the National Assembly, was arrested on 11 April 2016 upon his return to Cambodia and convicted on 10 October 2016 to two and a half years of imprisonment for inciting violence and discrimination. According to the complainants, the case was triggered following comments and videos he posted on Facebook in 2015 about the Viet Nam-Cambodia border issue, in particular assertions that the Government used "fake maps" to delineate the

border. His parliamentary immunity was not lifted. According to the complainants, the authorities argued that he was arrested in flagrante delicto because the crime was still ongoing as long as his comments remained on Facebook (although the court denied him bail on the grounds that there was a risk that he would then destroy evidence by removing the comments from Facebook);

- **Mr. Kem Sokha**, First Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Cambodia until October 2015 and current President of the CNRP, has faced intimidation and harassment since April 2015, including repeated threats, an attack on his residence (October 2015), his removal from office as first Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly (October 2015), and the “Mon Srey” case was levelled against him and has been ongoing since late February 2016. Although his immunity has not been lifted, an attempt to arrest Mr. Kem Sokha was made in May 2016 and he spent months holed up at the CNRP headquarters under de facto house arrest, according to the complainants. Mr. Kem Sokha was convicted to a five-month prison term on 9 September 2016 for refusing to appear for questioning;
- **Ms. Thak Lany**, a member of the Senate, was accused by the Prime Minister of slander and incitement in early August 2016, after a video was posted online in which she appears to be suggesting that the Prime Minister was involved in the murder of political analyst Kem Ley. According to the complainants, the senator has denied making any such statement and claims that the video has been edited. The senator was summoned to appear before the prosecutor twice before her parliamentary immunity was lifted on 1 September 2016, but she went in exile,

Recalling the following in relation to the political dialogue and the 2016 Committee visit to Cambodia:

- This political agreement put an end to the 2013 post-election crisis and established a mechanism for dialogue between the two main political parties represented in parliament, known as the “culture of dialogue”. The culture of dialogue was seen by both parties as crucial to ending the prevailing culture of violence. It opened more space for political dialogue within the parliamentary institution and allowed the parties to achieve progress on some issues of national interest between July 2014 and mid-2015. It failed, however, to address and resolve the cases at hand;
- In February 2015, the Committee conducted a “visit of last resort” to Cambodia, after extensive time had repeatedly been given to both parties to find negotiated solutions. The final report of the visit concluded that the parliamentarians had been – and continued to be – victims of serious violations of their fundamental rights. They were being prevented from effectively playing their role as parliamentarians and members of the opposition freely without fear of persecution;
- The National Assembly of Cambodia shared its official views in a letter dated 11 July 2016. It denied that any violations of human rights had been committed in the cases at hand and claimed that all opposition parliamentarians concerned were criminals who must be punished in accordance with the law. Accordingly, this was a purely judicial matter for the Cambodian courts to decide and not a political matter that could be resolved through the culture of dialogue, as political dialogue could not replace or violate the law,

Considering that no progress has been made on the cases under examination, nor on the resumption of a constructive political dialogue, and that the situation has further deteriorated in recent months, as demonstrated by the following new developments of concern that have occurred since the 135th IPU Assembly, according to the complainants:

- The three bodyguards sentenced to four years’ imprisonment (including three years suspended) after confessing to the beating of Mr. Kong Sophea and Mr. Nhay Chamroeun were released from jail after serving only one year. They were immediately reintegrated into the Prime Minister’s bodyguard unit and promoted by the Prime Minister. The appeals lodged by both members of parliament against the lightness of the first-instance sentence have not been processed to date. The other assailants were not investigated or held accountable. Neither were suspected organizers and instigators, despite clear evidence;
- In November 2016, Mr. Kem Sokha’s appeal was rejected by the court. On 2 December 2016, he was granted a royal pardon in respect of his conviction for failure to appear before the court. Relations between the CPP and the CNRP initially took a more positive tone after Mr. Kem Sokha’s pardon. The CNRP lifted its boycott and resumed parliamentary work. On 6 December 2016, the Prime Minister granted Mr. Kem Sokha the status of minority leader in parliament

(replacing Mr. Sam Rainsy). The main judicial proceedings in the “Mon Srey” case have, however, continued. A landmark decision of the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention was adopted on 18 December 2016. It concluded that the detention of the civil society members arrested in connection with the “Mon Srey” case was arbitrary;

- In late January 2017, Mr. Kem Sokha was stripped of the status of minority leader after the National Assembly amended its internal rules on 31 January 2016 upon the instructions of the Prime Minister. The provisions establishing a minority leader in parliament and formal status to the political opposition were repealed. They had been among the positive outcomes of the 2014 political agreement and had constituted the legal basis for the culture of dialogue;
- On 11 February 2017, Mr. Sam Rainsy resigned as leader of the CNRP to protect the party from being dissolved pursuant to legislative reform to amend the 1997 political party law. Mr. Kem Sokha took over as President of the CNRP following a CNRP Congress held on 2 March 2017. Ms Mu Sochua was elected Vice-President at that time, together with Mr. Eng Chhai Eang and Mr. Pol Ha;
- On 9 March 2017, amendments to the 1997 political party law were adopted after being fast-tracked by the Cambodian Parliament upon the request of the Prime Minister. The amended legislation gives unprecedented power to the executive and judicial branches to suspend and dissolve political parties. It prohibits people with criminal court convictions (including for minor offences) – such as Mr. Sam Rainsy – from holding senior positions in political parties. It also prohibits parties from receiving foreign funding. Pursuant to the amended law, if convicted of a criminal offence, a party leader will be banned from undertaking any political activity for a period of five years and his/her political party will be dissolved pursuant to a Supreme Court order. Numerous concerns have been voiced and conveyed to the Committee regarding the provisions of the amendments, which are couched in vague terms and appear squarely at odds with accepted restrictions on the right to freedom of association under international law (particularly with the requirements of necessity and proportionality). This is reflected in the legal analysis published on 28 March 2017 by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights;
- Following the entry into force of the amendments, the Cambodian authorities challenged the newly elected CNRP leadership. The CNRP’s request for re-registration, as required under the amended legislation, has therefore not been granted by the Minister of the Interior. The CPP has also threatened to sue the CNRP for insulting it and inciting social disorder on the grounds of the choice of the CNRP’s electoral campaign slogan (“change commune chiefs who serve the party and replace them with commune chiefs who serve the people”). The CNRP is currently no longer recognized as a political party at a time when the National Electoral Commission is due to finalize the list of candidates received for the local elections (which include CNRP candidates). A further legal cloud continues to hang over the new CNRP leadership, with the ongoing proceedings still dangling over Mr. Kem Sokha and Ms. Mu Sochua. This situation could result in the suspension and dissolution of the CNRP pursuant to amended political party law and deprive its new leaders of their right to participate in political activities for five years;

The following significant developments have occurred in the other cases under examination:

- New court cases have continued to be launched against Mr. Sam Rainsy. Four additional convictions were delivered in prior proceedings. He was found guilty in all cases. Sentences handed down totalled around eight years of imprisonment and heavy fines in early April 2017;
- Senator Sok Hour Hong was sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment on 9 November 2016. The defence lawyers’ requests for independent expert Internet analysis and to be granted an Internet connection in the court room, to demonstrate to the judges how he downloaded the litigious version of the 1979 treaty, were never granted during the proceedings. The appeal trial is scheduled to take place on 7 April 2017;
- Senator Thak Lany was convicted in absentia to 18 months in prison on 18 November 2016 after she went into exile. During the trial, the defence continued to assert that the video had been doctored and that Ms. Thak Lany had not made the incriminating statement, while prosecution witnesses claimed the contrary. The origin of the video clip was never made clear, according to the complainants. The presiding judge allegedly stopped the defence counsel when he began asking the prosecution witnesses who shot the video,

Considering the communications and renewed requests for information conveyed by the IPU Secretary General on behalf of the Committee on 12 and 23 November 2016 and 20 March 2017, to which no response from the Cambodian authorities has been forthcoming since the 135th IPU Assembly,

Considering that, since the submission of the initial complaint in July 2014, over a dozen official letters have been conveyed by the IPU to seek specific information, documentation and official observations from the parliamentary authorities on the cases at hand. However, the Cambodian authorities have only shared three responses in writing in three years, the last one dating back to October 2016. Those responses have been helpful but only addressed a few of the issues and information requests submitted. The authorities have failed to keep the Committee informed of new developments, such as the court verdicts delivered on the cases, and to provide supporting documentation, such as copies of the judicial decisions,

Recalling that an increasing number of States and international organizations, including the United Nations, have expressed deep concern about the deterioration in the political and human rights situation in Cambodia, in particular the worsening climate for opposition politicians and human rights activists given the escalation of politically motivated charges, judicial harassment and acts of violence. These State and international organizations, including the UN, have urged the Government of Cambodia to ensure full respect for human rights, including the freedoms of expression, association and assembly, and to adhere strictly to international fair-trial standards, thus ensuring that the law is applied without discrimination on any ground. They have called for the urgent resumption of political dialogue between the CPP and the CNRP and for the creation of a political environment in which opposition parties and civil society can all function freely and without fear of arrest or persecution, so that Cambodia is able to conduct free and fair elections that would ensure the legitimacy of the next government,

Considering the report entitled “Death Knell for Democracy – Attacks on Lawmakers and the Threat to Cambodia’s Institutions” issued on 20 March 2017 by ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights, and the findings and recommendations made by the United Nations OHCHR in the legal analysis of the amended political party law that was published on 28 March 2017,

Considering that the following information was shared during the two separate hearings held at the 136th IPU Assembly with the Cambodian delegation, on the one hand, and with a representative of the CNRP, on the other hand, in the Committee’s effort to continue hearing both sides in a systematic manner to promote dialogue:

- Both parties have reaffirmed their previous positions on the individual cases and were unable to report any concrete progress. They expressed, first and foremost, fears and concerns about the broader security situation in Cambodia on the eve of crucial elections, which might result in the first ever political changeover since the end of the civil war in Cambodia, should the CNRP win the elections. This unprecedented situation is at the origin of fears that Cambodia may go back to a situation of violence reminiscent of the past, due to heightened political tensions;
- The Cambodian delegation to the 136th Assembly reaffirmed on these grounds that the top priority for the Cambodian authorities was to ensure peace and to prevent any social disturbance at all costs. In their view, political stability would bring about more economic development and lead to increasing respect for human rights in due time. Significant progress had already been made in that direction in recent years. The delegation reaffirmed that the opposition should therefore stop “putting gas into the fire” and adopt a more constructive stance; Mr. Sam Rainsy should “cool down”. The delegation considered that, since his resignation, the new CNRP leaders had stepped down their rhetoric and the atmosphere had improved. They emphasized that they needed to work together and that the situation would improve after the elections. They affirmed that the political dialogue was an inclusive part of the CPP policy and that it had never stopped in their opinion. They claimed that Cambodia had always cooperated with the Committee and that the lack of written response resulted from a misunderstanding, communication problems and the lack of sufficient time provided to respond;
- Ms. Saumura Tioulong indicated during the hearing that prior concerns related to violations of the fundamental rights to freedom of opinion, expression, association and assembly remained unresolved. The current overall political environment was not conducive to free and fair elections. Mr. Sam Rainsy had been sidelined following the amendment of the political party legislation. Neither the ruling party nor the authorities had the right under international law and democratic principles to choose against whom they would compete in the next elections and that was in effect what was currently happening. There had been no progress since the designation of a new CNRP leadership, as the latter had not been cleared of pending criminal charges. The CNRP feared that it would be dissolved any day pursuant to the amended political

party law. This would be tantamount to cancelling the popular vote conferred upon the 66 CNRP parliamentarians elected in 2013 and going back to a one-party system just before the local elections. The only solution was to find a way forward through dialogue, strict respect for human rights and key democratic principles with the assistance of international mediation. The ruling party should not be scared of the possibility of losing power for a few years, but should rather consider this as normal practice in any democratic regime, and hence a positive outcome of the democratic reforms undertaken in Cambodia in the past few years. Guarantees could certainly be negotiated and put in place to ensure a smooth and peaceful transition should political power alternate, so as to avoid any subsequent political revenge and alleviate any existing fears,

Bearing in mind the following in relation to Cambodia's international obligations to respect, protect and promote fundamental human rights:

- As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Cambodia is bound to respect international human rights standards, including the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, equality before the law and to a fair trial conducted by an independent and impartial court and to participate in public affairs;
- Following the second cycle of the universal periodic review (UPR) of Cambodia, conducted by the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2014, the Cambodian authorities accepted, inter alia, recommendations to “promote a safe and favourable environment that allows individuals and groups to exercise the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly and put an end to harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrests and physical attacks, particularly in the context of peaceful demonstrations” and “take all necessary measures to guarantee the independence of justice without control or political interference” (Report of the Working Group on the UPR of Cambodia (A/HRC/26/16)),

Also bearing in mind the fundamental principle of “liberal multi-party democracy” enshrined in article 1 and chapter 3 of the Constitution of Cambodia on the rights and obligations of Khmer citizens, in particular article 31, which states that “The Kingdom of Cambodia recognizes and respects human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human rights and the covenants and conventions related to human rights [...]” as well as articles 80 and 104, which provide that: (1) members of the National Assembly and the Senate shall enjoy parliamentary immunity; (2) no member of parliament shall be prosecuted, detained or arrested because of opinions expressed in the exercise of his/her duties; (3) a member of parliament may only be prosecuted, arrested or detained with the permission of parliament; (4) in cases of flagrante delicto offences, the competent authority shall immediately report to parliament and request permission; (5) such permission requires the lifting of parliamentary immunity by a two-thirds majority vote; and (6) parliament can request the suspension of the detention or prosecution of any member of parliament following a three-quarters majority vote,

1. *Deplores* the lack of any concrete progress in resolving the cases at hand for the past two and a half years and the rare submission of a written response from the Cambodian authorities to IPU requests for information; *cannot but conclude* that there is a lack of political will on the part of the Cambodian authorities, including parliament, to resolve the cases;
2. *Expresses deep concern* at the escalation of the situation; *is particularly alarmed* at the allegations that the CNRP may be dissolved pursuant to the recently adopted amendments to the political party law, which do not comply with international standards on freedom of association and have clearly targeted Mr. Sam Rainsy and his party;
3. *Remains deeply concerned* that a large segment of opposition members of parliament, who make up the current leadership of the only opposition party in parliament, continue to face serious violations of their fundamental rights to freedom of opinion, expression, association and assembly; *considers* that these restrictions undermine their right to political participation, as they are being prevented from effectively carrying out their role as parliamentarians and members of the opposition freely without fear of persecution;
4. *Urges* the ruling party and the opposition once again to resume the political dialogue and to urgently resolve the individual cases at hand in strict compliance with human rights standards; *considers* that such dialogue can only be useful when there is sufficient opportunity for dissent and for the peaceful exercise of the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
5. *Recalls* that, pursuant to the principles and values defended by the IPU, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Democracy adopted by the IPU in September 1997, “a state of democracy ensures that the processes by which power is acceded to, wielded and alternates

allow for free political competition and are the product of open, free and non-discriminatory participation by the people, exercised in accordance with the rule of law, in both letter and spirit"; and *expresses the hope* for increased tolerance and acceptance of the role of the political opposition in Cambodia; *considers* that it is crucial for the CNRP to be able stand in the upcoming elections; *reiterates* the availability of the IPU to facilitate the political dialogue and to mediate in the crisis and to provide technical assistance to the Cambodian parliament to that end;

6. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
 7. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.
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MALAYSIA

MAL/15 - Anwar Ibrahim

Decision adopted by consensus by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session (Dhaka, 5 April 2017) ²

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Referring to the case of Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, a member of the Parliament of Malaysia, and to the decision it adopted at its 198th session (March 2016),

Taking into account the information provided over time by the Malaysian authorities and the information regularly provided by the complainants,

Taking into account the report of the trial observer, Mr. Mark Trowell QC, on the judicial review of the conviction and sentence after appeal of Dato Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim (CL/200/12(b)-R.1),

Recalling the following information on file:

- Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, Finance Minister from 1991 to 1998 and Deputy Prime Minister from December 1993 to September 1998, was dismissed from both posts in September 1998 and arrested on charges of abuse of power and sodomy. He was found guilty on both counts and sentenced, in 1999 and 2000 respectively, to a total of 15 years in prison. On 2 September 2004, the Federal Court quashed the conviction in the sodomy case. The IPU had arrived at the conclusion that the motives for Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's prosecution were not legal in nature and that the case had been built on a presumption of guilt;
- Mr. Anwar Ibrahim was re-elected in August 2008 and May 2013 and became the de facto leader of the opposition *Pakatan Rakyat* (The People's Alliance);
- On 28 June 2008, Mr. Mohammed Saiful Bukhari Azlan, a former male aide in Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's office, filed a complaint alleging that he had been forcibly sodomized by Mr. Anwar Ibrahim in a private apartment complex. The next day, when it was pointed out that Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, who was 61 at the time of the alleged rape and suffering from a bad back, was no physical match for a healthy 24-year-old, the complaint was revised to claim homosexual conduct by persuasion. Mr. Anwar Ibrahim was arrested on 16 July 2008 and released the next day. He was formally charged on 6 August 2008 under section 377B of the Malaysian Criminal Code, which punishes "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" with "imprisonment for a term which may extend to 20 years" and whipping. Mr. Anwar Ibrahim pleaded not guilty to the charge and, in addition to questioning the credibility of the evidence against him, pointed to several meetings and communications that took place between Mr. Mohammed Saiful Bukhari Azlan and senior politicians and police before and after the assault to show that he was the victim of a political conspiracy;
- On 9 January 2012, the first-instance judge acquitted Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, stating that there was no corroborating evidence to support Mr. Mohammed Saiful Bukhari Azlan's testimony, given that "it cannot be 100 per cent certain that the DNA presented as evidence was not contaminated". This left the court with nothing but the alleged victim's uncorroborated testimony and, as this was a sexual crime, it was reluctant to convict on that basis alone;

² The delegation of Malaysia expressed its reservations regarding the decision.

- On 7 March 2014, the Court of Appeal sentenced Mr. Anwar Ibrahim to a five-year prison term, ordered that the sentence be stayed pending appeal, and set bail at 10,000 ringgits;
- On 10 February 2015, the Federal Court upheld the conviction and sentence, which Mr. Anwar Ibrahim is currently serving in Sungai Buloh Prison in Selangor. As a result of the sentence, he will not be eligible to run for parliament for six years after he has completed his sentence, i.e. until July 2027;
- On 24 February 2015, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's family submitted an application for a Royal Pardon. On 16 March 2015, the Pardons Board rejected the application. On 24 June 2015, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim and his family filed an application for judicial review to seek permission from the High Court in Kuala Lumpur to review the Pardons Board's decision. The basis of their application was the presence on the Board of the then Attorney General, Mr. Patail, who had showed personal hostility against Mr. Anwar Ibrahim in the past when he was the lead prosecutor in the first sodomy trial against him ("Sodomy I"), which fact they claimed was unacceptable, particularly since the then Prime Minister, Mr. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, had reportedly promised that Mr. Patail would have no further involvement in the case. The defence counsel also invoked the testimony of retired senior police officer, Mr. Ramli Yusuff, about the alleged conspiracy to cover up the infamous "Black Eye" incident in 1998 during Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's detention in the course of "Sodomy I" and the fact that Mr. Patail had failed to disclose to the Board and the King that an order to investigate had been produced against the lead prosecutor, Mr. Muhammad Shafee Abdullah, following the false affidavit that the top lawyer had allegedly filed;
- On 30 April 2015, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim applied for a fresh judicial review of his conviction, under Rule 137 of the Federal Court rules, which is effectively to prevent injustice,

Recalling the report of the IPU observer, Mr. Mark Trowell QC (CL/197/11(b)-R.2), who had attended most of the hearings in the case in 2013 and 2014 and the final hearing on 10 February 2015 and raised serious concerns about the trial proceedings, the rebuttal of his report by the authorities and the response to the rebuttal by Mr. Trowell; *recalling also* the report of the Committee delegation (CL/197/11(b)-R.1) that visited Malaysia (29 June–1 July 2015),

Recalling that the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, with regard to the submission of a complaint about Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's situation, concluded on 1 September 2015 that, "The deprivation of liberty of Mr. Ibrahim is arbitrary, being in contravention of articles 10, 11, 19 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and falls within categories II and III of the categories applicable to the consideration of cases submitted to the Working Group [...] the Working Group requests the Government to take the necessary steps to remedy the situation of Mr. Ibrahim without delay and bring it into conformity with the standards and principles in the UDHR [...]; Taking into account all the circumstances of the case, the Working Group considers that the adequate remedy would be to release Mr. Ibrahim immediately, and ensure that his political rights that were removed based on his arbitrary detention be reinstated",

Recalling that the Malaysian authorities have repeatedly stated that Malaysia's courts were fully independent and that due process had been fully respected during the proceedings against Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, including by offering the counsel for defence many opportunities to present their arguments,

Considering the following new developments:

- On 14 December 2016, the Federal Court unanimously dismissed the application for a judicial review of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's sentence, on the basis that there had been no miscarriage of justice, as reported and analysed by the IPU trial observer;
- On 18 January 2017, the Court of Appeal set aside the decision of the High Court of 15 July 2016, declining Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's leave for judicial review and its refusal to refer the question of whether it was possible to challenge in court the Pardon Board's decision to the Federal Court;
- On 23 March 2017, a motion on an urgent matter of public importance was submitted to the House of Representatives by its member, Ms. Nurul Izzah Anwar, regarding the Government's position on the official notice by Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's lawyers to the Minister and the Commissioner General of Prisons to demand his release under section 43 of Act 537 and section III of the Prison Regulations (2000), allowing prisoners to be released on licence

following a risk assessment and adherence to requirements set forth by the authorities. In support of the motion, Ms. Nurul Izzah Anwar stated that it was just and consistent with the public interest that the Government had granted the release and that the campaign in support of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim regaining his liberty had garnered immense support. In response, the Speaker of the House of Representatives found that the motion concerned a matter which had already been decided by the judiciary, through an open trial, and noted that the Commissioner General of Prisons' Office had concluded that the application did not fulfil the conditions set forth by the regulations,

Recalling that the complainants state that the case against Mr. Anwar Ibrahim has to be seen against the backdrop of the uninterrupted rule of Malaysia by the same political party, UMNO, and that this majority had been shaken by a united opposition in the 2013 general elections; that the latter had managed to obtain 52 per cent of the popular vote, although – according to the complainant due to widespread gerrymandering and fraud – this did not translate into a majority of seats for the opposition; and that the complainants also point out that the alliance that Mr. Anwar Ibrahim set up and kept together fell apart after he was incarcerated,

Recalling also the following with regard to Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's health:

- According to the complainant, since his imprisonment on 10 February 2015, Mr. Anwar Ibrahim has not been receiving the recommended medical care and was not being cared for by an independent doctor specialized in his health issues, including treating the serious and constant pain in his right shoulder, which might require arthroscopic surgery to ensure long-term healing;
 - According to the leader of the Malaysian delegation, at the hearing held with the Committee on 18 March 2016, the authorities were going out of their way to allow Mr. Anwar Ibrahim to see any doctor of his choice, including, if that was his wish, by allowing him to fly in medical experts from abroad to treat him in Malaysia, but that he was not allowed to go abroad to undergo such treatment;
1. *Thanks* the IPU trial observer for his report, of which it takes note with interest;
 2. *Regrets* that the application for judicial review to the Federal Court was fruitless, as it offered an opportunity to remedy the shortcomings in the judicial proceedings;
 3. *Reaffirms its view* that, in light of the procedural irregularities, the serious doubts about the credibility of the evidence presented against Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, the dubious circumstances surrounding the alleged sodomy and the new information that has since come to light in support of the affirmation that his trial was based on other-than-legal considerations, his conviction and continued detention are untenable;
 4. *Calls once more, therefore, on* the authorities to use all possible legal means to release Mr. Anwar Ibrahim forthwith and to take the necessary measures to enable him to return to parliamentary life;
 5. *Is eager* to receive details on the steps taken to allow Mr. Anwar Ibrahim to be cared for by a doctor of his own choice and fully benefit from the medical expertise he wishes and the treatment he requires, including through, if needed, extensive care in hospital; *wishes* to be kept informed of the latest and next steps in Mr. Anwar Ibrahim's medical treatment;
 6. *Considers* that the case of Mr. Anwar Ibrahim, along with the other Malaysian cases under examination by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, requires a follow-up visit to Malaysia to address the outstanding serious concerns and questions;
 7. *Requests* the Secretary General to seek the agreement of the authorities for the visit and to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to assist;
 8. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.

MALDIVES

MLD/16 - Mariya Didi*	MLD/45 - Ahmed Sameer
MLD/28 - Ahmed Easa	MLD/46 - Afrasheem Ali
MLD/29 - Eva Abdulla*	MLD/48 - Ali Azim*
MLD/30 - Moosa Manik*	MLD/49 - Alhan Fahmy
MLD/31 - Ibrahim Rasheed	MLD/50 - Abdulla Shahid*
MLD/32 - Mohamed Shifaz	MLD/51 - Rozeyna Adam*
MLD/33 - Imthiyaz Fahmy*	MLD/52 - Ibrahim Mohamed Solih
MLD/34 - Mohamed Gasam	MLD/53 - Mohamed Nashiz
MLD/35 - Ahmed Rasheed	MLD/54 - Ibrahim Shareef*
MLD/36 - Mohamed Rasheed	MLD/55 - Ahmed Mahloof*
MLD/37 - Ali Riza	MLD/56 - Fayyaz Ismail*
MLD/39 - Ilyas Labeeb	MLD/57 - Mohamed Rasheed Hussain*
MLD/40 - Rugiyya Mohamed	MLD/58 - Ali Nizar*
MLD/41 - Mohamed Thoriq	MLD/59 - Mohamed Falah*
MLD/42 - Mohamed Aslam*	MLD/60 - Abdulla Riyaz*
MLD/43 - Mohammed Rasheed*	MLD/61 - Ali Hussain*
MLD/44 - Ali Waheed	

Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session (Dhaka, 5 April 2017)

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Referring to the cases of the above-mentioned current and former parliamentarians and to the decision adopted at its 199th session (October 2016),

Referring to the full report on the mission conducted to the Maldives from 10 to 12 October 2016 by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians (CL/200/11(b)-R.2),

Recalling that most of the above members of the People's Majlis belong to the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and that the case before the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was initiated in 2012 and includes instances of alleged arbitrary arrest and detention, frivolous legal proceedings and acts of threat and violence, including murder in the case of Mr. Afrasheem Ali, a former member of the ruling Progressive Party of Maldives (PPM),

Recalling that threats intensified around the 2014 parliamentary elections, as exemplified by the stabbing attack on the then member of parliament Mr. Alhan Fahmy in February 2014; and that, since then, the complainant claims that at least seven parliamentarians have been the subject of physical attacks and death threats, as well as unlawful arrests and ill-treatment by the police; and that, moreover, several parliamentarians were said to be facing criminal charges, allegedly for conducting peaceful protests,

Considering that member of parliament Mr. Ahmed Mahloof was convicted and sentenced on 18 and 25 July 2016 on two consecutive charges to a prison term of 10 months and 24 days for "obstructing police officers in the execution of their duties",

Considering that the mission observed, inter alia, the following regard to:

- **Death threats against members of parliament**
- The delegation was concerned about death threats targeting several prominent parliamentarians from the MDP and the fact that apparently no one had been held to account for those threats. The delegation noted that the authorities maintained that they were doing everything possible to protect the members of parliament at risk and to look into the threats, but

* (Re-)elected to parliament in the elections of March 2014.

that it was often difficult to identify the culprits and the victims sometimes failed to cooperate. The delegation was keen to receive details from the authorities on the precise steps taken to investigate the threats brought to their attention. It was also keen to know the precise protection measures in place for each of the members of parliament under threat;

- **Murder of Mr. Afrasheem Ali**

- With regard to the murder of Mr. Afrasheem Ali, a member of the People's Majlis, on 2 October 2012 the delegation was told that the authorities were still investigating the identity of the mastermind(s) of the murder;

- **The stabbing of former member of parliament Mr. Alhan Fahmy in February 2014**

- The delegation noted that, according to the Prosecutor General, charges had been pressed in March 2014 against one suspect, who was serving a sentence for a drug-related crime until March 2017, and that the trial was about to be completed;

- **Legal status of specific criminal cases initiated against three (former) members of parliament**

- The delegation was told that there was no legal action pending against Mr. Ibrahim Rasheed and Mr. Mohamed Shifaz and trusted that the authorities would inform the persons directly concerned. The delegation noted that the legal case against Mr. Mohamed Rasheed, on charges of terrorism in connection with acts of arson in February 2012, was still ongoing. It welcomed the initiative by the Prosecutor General to ask the court to speed up consideration of the case. The delegation hoped that this would happen and with full respect for due process;

- **The conviction of Mr. Ahmed Mahloof in July 2016**

- The delegation noted the contradictions in the accounts of the authorities, Mr. Mahloof's wife and others with regard to the facts and legal basis underpinning Mr. Mahloof's conviction and sentence to 10 months and 24 days of imprisonment, on two charges of obstructing police officers in the execution of their duties, namely for allegedly crossing a protest barricade and trying to flee the scene after leaving the court house following a hearing to extend his detention. The delegation was concerned about the severity of the sentence and reports that basic fair-trial standards had not been respected. The delegation failed to understand how it could be argued that Mr. Mahloof tried to flee from the police in the presence of a sizeable police force at the court building. The delegation said that it would greatly appreciate receiving a copy of the lower-court verdict in order to clarify that and other matters related to his prosecution. The delegation hoped that the appeal proceedings, to which it proposed sending an observer, would take place smoothly and with respect for the right to a fair trial. In the meantime, it hoped that the authorities would allow him to serve his sentence in the form of house arrest, in light of reports about Mr. Mahloof's poor health;

- **Undue restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly**

- The delegation was concerned about human rights developments that had a direct impact on the cases at hand. It concerned the recent adoption of the Protection of Reputation and Good Name and Freedom of Expression Act and the recent amendment to the Peaceful Assembly Act. Although the delegation agreed that freedom of expression was not absolute, it considered that the new legislation overly restricted the exercise of that right, due to its scope, the vagueness of some of its key provisions and the hefty fine imposed as punishment. Similarly, although it understood that Male was a small island prone to congestion, it also believed that legislation on the right to freedom of assembly should at all times have real meaning in practice. The delegation considered in this regard that the very limited designated areas for demonstrations and the fact that prior police authorization was required unduly restricted the exercise of that right;

- **Limited space for the opposition to contribute meaningfully to the work of parliament**

- Although the delegation appreciated that the current People's Majlis had adopted an impressive number of bills, it felt that such output should not come at the expense of the need for a substantive and meaningful discussion of each piece of legislation. The delegation was therefore concerned about reports that the adoption of important legislation had been fast tracked and adopted without any changes and proper discussion or consultation with stakeholders outside of parliament. Likewise, the delegation was concerned about reports that parliament, drawing on the majority of its members belonging to the ruling coalition parties, had

not carried out any serious oversight, even in the face of grave issues warranting public scrutiny. The delegation was also concerned in this regard about allegations of strong ties between the Government and members of independent oversight institutions such as the Elections Commission and the National Human Rights Commission, as well as the improper dismissal of the Auditor General, which hampered effective oversight;

- **Unacceptable behaviour in parliament and the handling of such incidents**

- The delegation noted that the parliamentary authorities and the opposition acknowledged that there had been unruly behaviour in parliament on both sides. The delegation believed that the Speaker fulfilled a paramount function in making sure that unacceptable behaviour, such as the spitting incident in February 2016, was immediately reprimanded and that all sides in parliament respected one another. It was absolutely crucial that the Speaker treated all sides impartially and was perceived as being above party politics. In that regard, it was also important that the Speaker allowed the opposition to make a meaningful contribution to the work of parliament and that the opposition respected his authority;

- **Importance of dialogue between the majority and the opposition and of engagement with the international community**

- The delegation strongly believed that the cases at hand had to be seen in the context of the ongoing political polarization in the Maldives. It believed that it was vital for all sides to redouble their efforts to engage in meaningful dialogue, with the help of the international community, to produce effective and inclusive institutions and long-term political solutions that enjoyed the trust of all Maldivians. The delegation therefore deeply regretted the recent decision by the Maldivian authorities to leave the Commonwealth, and hoped that the authorities would reconsider that decision,

place: *Considering* the following new information provided by the complainant since the mission took

- In December 2016 and February 2017, Mr. Mahloof was granted leave to go to India for 10 days and seven days respectively for medical treatment. According to the complainant, the appeal proceedings in his case have not started;
 - On 27 March 2017, a motion of no-confidence against the Speaker was voted and defeated in the People's Majlis. The complainant alleges that the Maldivian National Defence Force were ordered to bar media and civil society organizations from observing the sitting, that proper procedure was not followed by allowing for a roll call rather than an electronic vote on the motion itself, that 13 parliamentarians were forcibly removed from the Chamber as a completely disproportionate response to the disorder that reigned in the Chamber, and that subsequent voting records were incorrect and/or manipulated. The complainant points out that the vote in the People's Majlis took place against heightened harassment of parliamentarians, through death threats and threats against their families and threats of prosecution on trumped-up charges,
1. *Thanks* the mission delegation for the work carried out and endorses its overall conclusions; *regrets* that the Maldivian authorities have not submitted any observations on the report, nor the information they undertook to provide on various pending issues; *remains keen* to receive this further official information;
 2. *Is deeply concerned about* the continued death threats against opposition members of parliament and the reduced space for freedom of expression and assembly and for the opposition to meaningfully contribute to the work of parliament; *calls on* the authorities to do everything possible to address these concerns and to report back on their action;
 3. *Deeply regrets* that the authorities have not deemed fit to allow Mr. Mahloof to serve his sentence in the form of house arrest;
 4. *Reiterates* its concern about the severity of the sentence against him and its failure to understand the justification for his conviction and sentence; *is concerned* by the apparent lack of action to deal with his appeal, which may well lead Mr. Mahloof to serve his full sentence by the time the appeal ruling is rendered; *considers* that for this reason alone the authorities should release him forthwith;

5. *Is concerned* about the allegations surrounding the recent handling of the motion of no-confidence, also because it attests to the continued political polarization in the Maldives; *thanks* the parliamentary authorities for providing video footage of the situation that reigned in the People's Majlis during the vote on the no-confidence motion; and *will examine* this material thoroughly;
 6. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainants and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
 7. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.
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MONGOLIA

MON/01 - Zorig Sanjasuuren

Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session (Dhaka, 5 April 2017)

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Referring to the case of Mr. Zorig Sanjasuuren, a member of the State Great Hural of Mongolia, and acting Minister of Infrastructure Development – regarded as the father of the democracy movement in Mongolia in the 1990s – who was assassinated on 2 October 1998, and to the decisions adopted by the IPU Governing Council at its 198th session (Lusaka, March 2016) and by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians at its 152nd session (January 2017),

Referring to the letters of 27 January and 27 March 2017 of the Vice-Chairman of the State Great Hural, to the hearing held with two members of the Mongolian delegation to the 136th IPU Assembly and to the information recently shared by the complainants and by third parties,

Referring also to the report of the visit conducted to Mongolia (CL/198/12(b)-R.1) from 16 to 19 September 2015,

Recalling the following long-standing concerns in this case:

- Uninterrupted investigations have officially been ongoing since Mr. Zorig's assassination almost 19 years ago. They have remained shrouded in secrecy and have yielded little results until recently. The excessive secrecy surrounding the investigation and the lack of progress has strongly eroded the trust and confidence in the investigative process and in the existence of a real political will to establish the truth. The renewed commitments to shed light on Mr. Zorig's assassination have long been seen as empty political promises;
- The murder is still widely believed to have been a political assassination that was covered up. It cannot be excluded that political interference is one of many combined factors that are likely to account for the lack of results in the investigation and include:
 - Initial investigative deficiencies (particularly contamination of the crime scene);
 - Issues related to the training and competence of the investigators, as well as forensic technologies available;
 - The endless replacement of investigators;
 - The top secret classification of the case, which is the main reason for the continued role of the central intelligence agency, the unusually wide scope of its involvement and the "wall of secrecy" surrounding the case – including in relation to alleged dubious investigation and questioning methods used by the Mongolian intelligence services, which have reportedly included the mistreatment of suspects and the use of coerced confessions on several occasions in the past;
 - The political dimension of the case and its subsequent political instrumentalization by political parties;
 - The time elapsed and its consequences;
 - The lack of accountability of the relevant authorities, in view of the absence of results in the investigation,

Further recalling that, following the visit conducted to Mongolia, the IPU Governing Council has called on the Mongolian authorities to do their utmost to ensure that justice is done and seen to be done in resolving the case of Mr. Zorig's assassination, and to give urgent consideration to the following recommendations:

- Urgently declassify the case and increase transparency in the investigation, including by engaging in regular communication with the IPU and Mr. Zorig's relatives, but also by sharing public information with the Mongolian people on the results and challenges of the investigation, in order to restore confidence in the investigative efforts and demonstrate that the case has been handled in an impartial, independent and effective manner;
- Limit the role of the central intelligence agency to a minimum and ensure strict compliance with standards of due process, as well as accountability and redress for abuses committed in the course of the investigation; place the investigation under the full and effective control of the General Prosecutor's office; seek specialized assistance in the investigation of contract killings and include experienced foreign criminal experts in the investigation (as part of the existing working group or of a new independent investigative mechanism); focus on the examination of witness statements, public records and open source materials, rather than exclusively investing in forensic analysis;
- Grant access to the investigative files to Mr. Zorig's relatives, who are party to the legal procedure, and inform them regularly of new developments in the investigation;
- Use existing institutional checks and balances to ensure that all authorities concerned from the legislative, executive and judicial branches of power deliver appropriate results and are held accountable if and when failing to fulfil their constitutional and legal duties;
- Keep the IPU regularly apprised of: (i) recent investigative activities, including their outcome and outstanding challenges; (ii) the assessment and recommendations made by the special oversight subcommittee of the State Great Hural; and (iii) and progress made in implementing the recommendations arising out of the mission report,

Recalling that significant developments have taken place in the case in recent months; and *taking into account* that parliamentary elections took place in June 2016; that they have resulted in the defeat of the Democratic Party and brought the Mongolian People's Party (MPP) back to power; and that presidential elections are scheduled for late June 2017,

Considering the following information:

- **Detention and torture of Ms. Bulgan**

- Ms. Banzragch Bulgan, Mr. Zorig's widow, was arrested on 13 November 2015 – shortly after the Committee's visit to Mongolia. She was detained at the Tuv Aimag (central province) prison by the central intelligence agency, in conditions allegedly amounting to torture under international human rights standards. Reliable sources stated that Ms. Bulgan was being held in solitary confinement and deprived of medical care, in a cell where artificial lighting was kept on 24 hours a day. According to them, she had been interrogated by intelligence officers and put under intense psychological pressure. The sources indicated that her prolonged detention had not been reviewed and authorized by a judge and that no charges had been formally brought against her by March 2016. Visits to Ms. Bulgan in detention were allegedly restricted. Her lawyer had not been granted access to the evidence against her, on the grounds that the case was classified. This was the second time that she had been placed in illegal detention since the start of the investigation;
- The allegations relating to Ms. Bulgan's detention, torture and the violation of her rights to due process were ascertained during the 13 April 2016 visit of a parliamentary delegation headed by Mr. Bold Luvsanvandan, the then head of the parliamentary human rights commission. The delegation noted that the prison was under the full control of the intelligence services. It called on the President of Mongolia, the Speaker of the State Great Hural parliament and the Prime Minister to take action to put an end to that situation. Around 22 April 2016, Ms Bulgan was transferred to another prison, where she was reportedly held in better conditions and received medical care. A hearing was scheduled for 13 May 2016 to extend Ms. Bulgan's detention;
- No subsequent information was forthcoming on Ms. Bulgan's situation until January 2017, despite urgent appeals communicated to the Parliament of Mongolia. The Vice-Chairman of the State Great Hural responded in letters dated 27 January and 27 March 2017 that Ms. Bulgan had been released. She had been investigated and questioned as a suspect and defendant.

Her participation in the case was not proved, the case was “backed down” and “while obtaining additional evidence, her involvement in the crime was not established and thus the case was terminated”. The Committee was able to obtain confirmation from third parties that Ms. Bulgan had indeed been released;

- In relation to the detention and torture of Ms. Bulgan, the members of the delegation of Mongolia to the 136th IPU Assembly stated that, if torture had taken place while she was in detention, she could have complained to NGOs and the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia, as they were paying close attention to such issues. She was, in any case, still entitled to lodge a judicial complaint if her rights had been violated,

- **Arrests and first instance trial**

- Three suspects were reportedly arrested in August 2015 in connection with Mr. Zorig’s murder and had allegedly confessed to the murder, possibly in relation to the “Erdenet scenario”, according to media reports. That scenario was one of the possible motives for the assassination, which had never been discounted. It was mentioned that Mr. Zorig had been informed of the embezzlement of funds from Erdenet (a major Mongolian mining company) and was ready to disclose the information or to take appropriate action to hold the culprits accountable, if and when appointed Prime Minister. During its visit to Mongolia – which took place shortly after these arrests – the Committee’s delegation was never informed about these arrests, or even that any suspects in the case were being detained. The Mongolian authorities provided no response on these developments before January 2017, despite the urgent requests for information communicated to them;

- In January 2017, the Mongolian authorities and the complainants confirmed that three suspects had been convicted for Mr. Zorig’s murder on 27 December 2016 and sentenced to 24 to 25 years’ imprisonment. The verdict was handed down after a trial held behind closed doors. Mr. Zorig’s family and their lawyer were authorized to attend the trial, but were prohibited from sharing information on the proceedings or the verdict on the grounds that the case was classified. They would be arrested and prosecuted in the event they failed to comply. No copy of the verdict or details of the proceedings was made available to the IPU or to the public on the same grounds. Mr. Zorig’s family deplored that the requests made for the declassification of the case and for a public trial were rejected by the Mongolian authorities, including by the court. Mr. Zorig’s family issued a public statement questioning the legitimacy of the closed trial and of the court decision and considered that justice has not been done and that the case should continue;

- Media reports published in Mongolia and abroad after the verdict further reflected the general lack of confidence in the impartiality and independence of the investigation and court proceedings. These reports considered that the trial was a smokescreen designed to conceal the real culprit(s)/mastermind(s) of the assassination. They emphasized that many questions remained unanswered. They recalled that the case had been highly politicized and noted it was hardly credible that the three convicted persons could have committed the assassination 18 years ago, considering their age at the time. They also recalled that at least 17 persons, including witnesses, police and judicial officers, had died in unexplained circumstances, and that the investigation had never shed light on the circumstances of their death;

- The Vice-Chairman of the State Great Hural stated that the defendants and the victims’ lawyers had appealed the first instance conviction and that parliament would “carefully observe” the appeal proceedings and keep the IPU informed,

- **Appeal trial**

- The appeal trial was held over one single day on 14 March 2017. It was held behind closed doors again. At the opening of the hearing, the family’s lawyer once again requested, in vain, that the case be declassified and that the proceedings be held in open court. The lawyers for the accused and for the Zorig family were allowed to attend the proceedings, but were barred from sharing any information relating thereto. The verdict was issued the same day and confirmed the first instance sentence;

- The Vice-Chairman of the State Great Hural stated, in a letter dated 27 March 2017, that the appeals court had reviewed the appeals case and concluded that all legal and procedural requirements had been respected pursuant to the law on criminal procedure and other regulations, including the right of the parties to appeal. According to the letter, the testimonies

and examination of the suspects and of the witnesses by the court were consistent with and corroborated each other. Witnesses appeared before the court and immediately identified the suspects. Information obtained through undercover operations was proved and all evidence collected during the investigation was examined. The law had not been violated and the appeal was therefore dismissed. The Vice-Chairman also confirmed that the accused and the victims had requested to hold the trial openly but that the court had ruled that it was impossible because the 220-page judicial files included five pages of information classified as top secret. Accordingly, under article 235(1) of the criminal procedure law, the trial was closed to the public pursuant to the state secret law. It was thereafter forbidden to share the court decision unless authorized authorities made a decision to declassify the case. The Vice-Chairman nevertheless stated that, once the final court decision was delivered, “some documents and testimonies relating to the crime” would be exposed to the public;

- The Mongolian authorities and the complainant confirmed that the defendants and the victims could lodge a last-resort appeal before the Supreme Court’s criminal law chamber. The Supreme Court would then make the final decision on the case, which is therefore not yet concluded at this stage. The Vice-Chairman of the State Great Hural made a commitment that the Parliament of Mongolia would demand a “fair and correct decision” in compliance with the law. In a press conference held in early April 2017, the Vice-Chairman expressed public concerns about the manner in which the Zorig case had been handled,

Considering that, at the hearing held during the 136th IPU Assembly, two members of the Mongolian delegation shared the additional following information:

- The proceedings had exclusively targeted the direct perpetrators of the assassination (four of which had been identified, with only three still being alive). The motives established by the court were “greed and money”. A second investigation appeared to have been opened to target the organizers and the instigators of the assassination on the basis of names allegedly provided by the convicted suspects. These proceedings would probably look into possible political motives of the assassination. A second trial would subsequently follow in due time. Little information had been made available to parliament on these recent developments, as the criminal investigation is confidential and remains classified;
- The two members of the delegation reconfirmed that the trials were closed pursuant to existing rules of criminal procedure, which warrant top-level confidentiality when classified information is involved as evidence in a case. The parliamentary authorities had therefore not been authorized to provide copies of the court decisions to the IPU. The judicial authorities had informed parliament that the appeals court had verified that all legal and evidentiary requirements had been respected during the trial proceedings. The investigation may have been rushed but it was in accordance with the law, which provided that investigations needed to be completed within certain deadlines according to the information obtained by parliament;
- The members of the delegation stated that they shared the Committee’s concern about the need for justice to be done in this case and to be seen to be done. They also condemned the politicization of the case. They stated that, if any one of three suspects convicted were not guilty, it would be perceived as political repression and would look very bad for Mongolia. The members of the delegation observed that the fact that the trial had taken place behind closed doors indeed looked suspicious to the people. The fact that Ms. Bulgan did not participate in any of the hearings during the trials, in spite of being the only eyewitness in the case, also raised questions and suspicions. However, it was in compliance with criminal procedure laws;
- The members of the delegation stated that they were only able to obtain limited information on the case, due to the separation of powers and the classification of the case. Neither members of parliament or parliament could intervene in the investigative and judicial process, again due to the separation of powers. Given the concerns raised in this case and in others, a working group was now being established to amend the Constitution. A draft amendment was being prepared and discussed to allow for the establishment of ad hoc committees mandated to review suspicious cases such as that of Mr. Zorig at the end of the investigative and judicial proceedings;
- The members of the delegation stated that the Committee would be welcome should it decide to send a delegation to Mongolia to seek further information and discuss its concerns with all relevant authorities,

Recalling that Mongolia is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, it is therefore bound to ensure that: (i) no suspects or witnesses shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment; (ii) that perpetrators of such acts should be held accountable and that confessions obtained through such means should not be considered admissible evidence in court proceedings; and (iii) that any person accused of a criminal charge shall be entitled to a fair and public trial by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. The press and the public may be excluded from all or part of a trial only for moral reasons or reasons of public order or national security in a democratic society, or when the interest of the private lives of the parties so requires. Such restrictive measure should be proportionate and only allowed to the extent strictly necessary in special circumstances where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice. Any judgement rendered in a criminal case should in any case be made public,

1. *Thanks* the Vice-Chairman of the State Great Hural and the members of the delegation of Mongolia for their cooperation; and *is encouraged* by the resumption of a constructive dialogue with the State Great Hural;
2. *Takes note with interest* that, since late December 2016, first instance and appeals trials have been conducted, with the result that three suspects have been convicted and sentenced to long prison terms for their involvement as the direct perpetrators of the assassination of Mr. Zorig; that the case is still ongoing, as the defendants and the victims' lawyers are entitled to a last-resort appeal to the Supreme court; and that a new, confidential investigation is now being initiated against suspected organizers and instigators of the assassination;
3. *Is deeply concerned* that the trials were held behind closed doors and that the court decisions have not been disclosed; *points out* that neither the parliamentary authorities, nor Mr. Zorig's family or the Mongolian people, consider that justice has been done or has been seen to be done in the recent trial proceedings, and that serious concerns and questions on the case remain unanswered due to the continued excessive secrecy of the proceedings and top-secret classification of the case;
4. *Remains concerned* that the alleged torture of Ms. Bulgan has not been adequately addressed by the relevant authorities of Mongolia, despite her release; and *still fails to understand* on what grounds her prolonged detention could have been legal, given that the authorities confirmed that her participation in the crime had not been proven;
5. *Reaffirms its prior concerns* about the politicization of the case; *is therefore deeply troubled* by the sudden rush in the proceedings following almost 20 years of apparent inertia in the investigative process; and *observes* that this coincides with a major change in political power following parliamentary elections and the fast-approaching presidential elections in June 2017;
6. *Considers* that the recent trials violated international fair-trial standards and further undermine the legitimacy and integrity of the whole investigative process; *calls again* for the immediate declassification of the case; and *urges* the Supreme Court to remedy the existing serious deficiencies by ordering a public re-trial in the presence of domestic and international observers, in order to avoid any miscarriage of justice and to help shed light on the truth in this case; *expresses its wish* to send a trial observer to attend the proceedings to make an independent assessment of the fairness and legality of the proceedings; *further points out* that there are many alternative means available for maintaining a reasonable and appropriate measure of confidentiality in respect of legitimate sensitive evidence, without infringing on the right to a fair trial or jeopardizing the credibility and integrity of the proceedings and of the judicial institution;
7. *Remains convinced* that transparency, paired with strict respect for due process and the rights of defence, in compliance with the Constitution of Mongolia and international standards, could eventually restore confidence in the long-standing efforts to shed light on the truth of the assassination of Mr. Zorig, and contribute to further strengthening democracy and the rule of law in Mongolia;
8. *Notes with interest* that the State Great Hural is still actively monitoring the case; and *expresses its support and encouragement* for its ongoing efforts to look into new ways of exercising proactive oversight in the case; *wishes to receive* more detailed information in this respect, particularly on the draft constitutional amendment under discussion; *further calls on* parliament

to urgently review the existing State secret laws and regulations and to bring them into line with international standards and best practices in that respect; *offers* the availability of the IPU to facilitate technical assistance on these matters upon request;

9. *Wishes* the Committee to conduct a mission to Mongolia to obtain more information on recent developments from all relevant authorities and to facilitate progress in the case, in strict compliance with international human rights standards; *welcomes* the positive response of the two members of the Mongolian delegation in that respect; and *trusts* that it will soon receive official confirmation from the Parliament of Mongolia to that end; *also wishes* to continue being kept regularly apprised of any new developments relating to the case;
 10. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
 11. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back in due course.
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PHILIPPINES

PHI/08 – Leila de Lima

Decision adopted unanimously by the IPU Governing Council at its 200th session (Dhaka, 5 April 2017)

The Governing Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

Having before it the case of Ms. Leila de Lima, a member of the Senate of the Philippines, which has been examined by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians pursuant to the Procedure for the examination and treatment of complaints (Annex I of the revised rules and practices),

Considering the letter dated 23 January 2017 from the President of the Senate and the information he provided at the hearing with the Committee on 3 April 2017,

Considering the following information on file:

- Ms. de Lima served as Chairperson of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights from May 2008 until June 2010, when she was appointed as the Philippine Secretary of Justice. She resigned from this position in October 2015 to focus on her candidacy for a seat in the Senate in the parliamentary elections of May 2016, which bid was successful;
- Senator de Lima has been a lifelong advocate of the fight against extrajudicial killings. On March 2009, as the then Chairperson of the Commission on Human Rights, she led a series of investigations into a number of alleged extrajudicial killings linked to the so-called Davao Death Squad (DDS) in Davao City, run by the then Mayor Duterte. According to the complainant, the then mayor and now President of the Philippines was reportedly behind the DDS. The investigation became a seed of antagonism and animosity between the senator and the future president of the country;
- On 13 July 2016, Senator de Lima, as Chair of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights, filed and initiated the proposed *Senate Resolution No. 9*, opening an inquiry into the alleged summary killings of thousands of suspected drug users and drug dealers since President Duterte took office in June 2016 and launched his war on drugs;
- Public hearings for the inquiry started on 22 August 2016 and were highlighted by the testimony of a self-confessed hitman and member of the DDS, Mr. Edgar Matobato, who had implicated President Duterte in some of the extrajudicial killings in Davao City. According to the President of the Senate, however, Mr. Matobato's hearing revealed several inconsistencies in his testimony;
- The President of the Senate stated that several observations made by other senators pointed to Senator de Lima's predisposition to conduct the hearing in a manner not best reflecting the objectiveness and neutrality expected of an impartial arbiter. Accordingly, on 19 September 2016, a motion was approved in the Senate to declare vacant the chair and membership of the

Committee on Justice and Human Rights. According to the President of the Senate, this was done strictly in keeping with the Senate Rules of Procedure; such decisions are taken regularly as part of the political process and the motion was not in any way meted out to sanction her inquiry. The complainant nevertheless claims that the Senate ousted Senator de Lima as chair in an apparent reprisal for her inquiry;

- According to the complainant, subsequent to Senator de Lima's ousting as chair, the committee adopted its report (known as "the Gordon Report", in reference to the new chair of the inquiry) in an unorthodox manner, as no meeting was convened to discuss the draft report. Senator de Lima produced a "dissenting report" in December 2016, as she considered that the inquiry had failed on several grounds, notably on its refusal to allow the testimonies of witnesses of extrajudicial killings to be heard before the Commission on Human Rights, on its premature termination and on its failure to take due account of the testimonies of Mr. Matobato, among others. Senator de Lima said, "Due to the premature and abrupt termination of the Senate investigation, no comprehensive, in-depth gathering and assessment of the evidence was done by the Committee. Instead, what came out was a virtual whitewash designed to absolve the national leadership as led by the President";
- The complainant states that Senator de Lima's concerns about extrajudicial killings are well documented and refers to a number of reports, including one from Human Rights Watch, entitled *Licence to Kill: Philippine Police Killings in Duterte's War on Drugs*, of March 2017. According to this report, President Duterte's "war on drugs" has produced a campaign of unlawful killings by Philippine national police personnel and unidentified "vigilantes", which has resulted in the deaths of more than 7,000 suspected drug users and dealers since 1 July 2016. In addition, the report states that President Duterte's public endorsement of the campaign implicates him and other senior figures in possible incitement to violence, instigation of murder and responsibility for crimes against humanity. The report exposes the falsehood of official police reports that invariably assert self-defence to justify unlawful police killings. In fact, police routinely carry out extrajudicial killings of drug suspects and then cover up those crimes. In several instances investigated by Human Rights Watch, suspects in police custody were later found dead and classified by police as "found bodies", casting doubt on government assertions that most killings have been committed by vigilantes or rival drug gangs. The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in reviewing the Philippines' implementation of the provisions of its International Covenant, concluded on 7 October 2016 that "it is deeply concerned that declarations made by high-ranking officials in the context of the "war on drugs" may be seen to encourage and legitimize violence against drug users, including extrajudicial killings" and observed that "the number of extrajudicial killings of drug suspects has drastically increased in recent months [...]";
- The complainant also points to another report by Human Rights Watch of 2009, entitled *You Can Die Any Time: Death Squad Killings in Mindanao*. It details the involvement of police and local government officials in targeted death squad killings in Davao City during President Duterte's time as mayor. Moreover, Human Rights Watch's 2014 report, entitled *One Shot to the Head: Death Squad Killings in Tagum City, Philippines*, documents police involvement in what appeared to be a copycat policy of extrajudicial killings in a city nearby, Davao City. The President of the Senate points out that, on 29 March 2012, the Office of the Ombudsman sanctioned 21 high-ranking officers of the Philippine national police (PNP) following the unabated killings in Davao City in recent years attributed to the alleged DDS. The Office of the Ombudsman closed its investigation on a complaint filed against President Duterte for his alleged involvement in the "killings attributed or attributable to the DDS" during his time as Mayor of Davao City, there being no evidence to support the involvement of (the then) Mayor Duterte and the local officials of Davao City in the said acts. According to the President of the Senate, under the Philippine Government set-up, there are other government agencies better equipped than the Senate to find out whether the "police and local government unit (LGU) officials are involved in targeted killings";
- On 11 August 2016, or almost a month after Senator de Lima filed her Senate resolution and inquiry, President Duterte stated, in reference to Senator de Lima, in a media interview in Davao City, "one day soon I will have to destroy her in public". The interview in Davao City was followed by at least 22 public occasions (as of 28 November 2016) on which President Duterte was recorded consistently hurling insults and accusations against Senator de Lima. President Duterte declared publicly and repeatedly Senator de Lima's guilt and her alleged complicity in the illegal drug trade in the country when she was Secretary of the Department of Justice during the previous administration,

reportedly urging her to resign and saying, “if I were Senator de Lima, I would hang myself”. The complainant also states that President Duterte said that charges would be filed against Senator de Lima and that she would end up in prison, and that his remarks show that he has a long-standing grudge against her. The President of the Senate has pointed out that everyone enjoys freedom of expression in the Philippines and that Senator de Lima has herself made some scathing comments about President Duterte, including calling him a “psychopathic serial killer”;

- According to the complainant, in concert with the acts and words of the President, on 19 August 2016, the Speaker of the House, Mr. Pantaleon Alvarez, filed *Senate Resolution No. 105*, seeking an investigation into the proliferation of the drug trade at New Bilibid Prison (hereinafter NBP) when Senator de Lima was Secretary of Justice. Soon thereafter, the investigation of the House of Representatives proceeded, through its Committee on Justice. In an abrupt departure from, and in violation of, the rules on committee hearings at the House of Representatives, it was the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Mr. Vitaliano N. Aguirre II, who presented the witnesses and directed the questions put to them. Secretary Aguirre, along with his team of prosecutors, took charge not only of the questioning of the witnesses but of the entire course of the House investigation up until its termination. Testimonies from dozens of inmates at the NBP tagged Senator de Lima as an alleged “protector” of drug syndicates and a supposed key personality in the illegal drug trade in the national jail. Not content with his dominant role in the House inquiry, Secretary Aguirre made accusations and offensive remarks against Senator de Lima on numerous occasions before members of the media;
- Senator de Lima has denied any involvement in drug trafficking in the NBP and points out that it was her who took action on this matter, such as on 15 December 2014 when, in a surprise raid inside the NBP, authorities discovered “VIP treatment” for some high-profile inmates and drug lords. Police also found illegal drugs inside the prison cells. Senator de Lima, then Secretary of Justice, ordered the inspection and was present during the raid. It appears that, under Senator de Lima’s watch as Secretary of Justice, the Department of Justice (DoJ) conducted over 30 inspections at the NBP as part of its surprise inspections initiative called “Oplan Galugad”;
- On 20 September 2016, the House Committee on Justice began its hearings with regard to *Senate Resolution No. 105*. Senator de Lima reportedly refused to attend the hearings, calling it a “sham inquiry” designed to discredit her because of her vocal opposition to President Duterte. According to the complainant, those who attested to Senator de Lima receiving drug money for her senatorial campaign had been pressured or offered rewards to present false testimony against her. One such witness is Mr. Ronnie Dayan, Senator de Lima’s former driver. A complaint for unethical behaviour was reportedly filed with the Senate Committee on Ethics and Privileges against Senator de Lima on 12 December 2016, resulting from the inquiry conducted by the House pursuant to *Senate Resolution No. 105*;
- On 21 November 2016, the DoJ panel of investigating prosecutors issued subpoenas to Senator de Lima in the following cases: (i) NPS No. XVI-INV-16J-00313, entitled Volunteers against Crime and Corruption (VACC), represented by Dante Jimenez versus Senator de Lima et al; (ii) NPS XVI-INV-16J-00315, entitled Reynaldo Esmeralda and Ruel Lasala versus Senator de Lima et al; (iii) NPS XVI-INV-16K-00331, entitled Jaybee Nino Sebastian, represented by his wife, Ms. Roxanne Sebastian, versus Senator de Lima et al; and (iv) NPS XVI-INV-16-K-00336, entitled National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) versus Senator de Lima et al;
- On 2 December 2016, Senator de Lima filed her omnibus motion, arguing that the investigation of the cases was within the exclusive authority and sole jurisdiction of the Office of the Ombudsman and that, considering the partiality, bias and lack of objectivity of the Secretary of Justice and the panel of investigating prosecutors in those cases, these officials should limit themselves to referring the cases to the Office of the Ombudsman;
- On 9 December 2016, a hearing was set on the omnibus motion. On 12 December 2016, Senator de Lima submitted her reply to the comments/opposition of Attorney Eduardo Bringas, in attendance on behalf of complainants VACC (I.S. No. INV-16J- 00313), together with a “manifestation with motion to first resolve pending incidents and to defer further proceedings”. On 21 December 2016, however, the DoJ panel ruled that the case was declared “submitted for resolution” and that all pending incidents would be resolved together with the merits of the case in one resolution;

- Senator de Lima's counsel made a verbal request for reconsideration, which was verbally denied. When her counsel enquired if a written order would be issued, the respondent DoJ panel stated that they saw no need for the same and would merely resolve all pending incidents. Given the serious abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction on account of an evident lack of investigative authority, institutional bias, manifest partiality and undue haste by which the respondent DoJ panel conducted the preliminary investigation of the four aforementioned cases, Senator de Lima filed a petition for prohibition and certiorari with the Court of Appeals under Rule 65 of the Rules of Court;
- On 17 February 2017, three complaints of illegal drug trading against Senator de Lima were filed with the Muntinlupa Regional Trial Court. The complaints were based on the findings and conclusions of the DoJ panel, contained in a joint resolution dated 14 February 2017. They charge Senator de Lima, Mr. Rafael Ragos and Mr. Ronnie Dayan with illegal drug trading, punishable under section 5, in relation to section 3(jj), section 26(b) and section 28 of Republic Act No. 9165 (Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002), and were assigned to Judge Juanita Guerrero's Branch 204. On 20 February 2017, Senator de Lima promptly filed a motion to quash, mainly on the grounds of the court's lack of jurisdiction over the offence charged against Senator de Lima, the DoJ panel's lack of authority to file the complaints, the fact that the complaints include more than one offence and that the allegations and the recital of facts, both in the complaints and in the resolution, do not allege the corpus delicti of the charge of violation of Republic Act No. 9165. In the same motion, Senator de Lima also placed on record some of her observations, including that the existing evidence does not justify the filing of the case in court. The motion to quash was scheduled for a hearing on 24 February 2017 and the DoJ panel filed a motion to re-set in order to have the hearing re-scheduled for 3 March 2017;
- On 23 February 2017, the judge issued the disputed order upon which the arrest warrant, dated the same day, was issued. According to the complainant, the judge's actions were possibly made with undue haste and inordinate interest, since a motion to quash was yet to be resolved and the judge would not have had time to determine the probable cause, given the voluminous records submitted by the prosecution and the likewise voluminous motion to quash filed by Senator de Lima;
- On 24 February 2017, the arrest warrant in question was served on Senator de Lima by CIDG officials. She is currently detained at the PNP custodial centre in Camp Crame, Quezon City, in accordance with the order issued by the respondent judge committing her to the Custodial Service Unit. Later that day, during the hearing fixed to hear the motion to re-set filed by the DoJ panel, the judge defended the issuance of the arrest warrant, despite failing to first consider and resolve the petitioner's motion to quash by, according to the complainant, making the flawed claim that she had to acquire jurisdiction over the person of the Senator first before she could resolve her motion to quash. Senator de Lima challenged this decision before the Court of Appeals and subsequently the Supreme Court, where the matter is pending,

Considering that Senator de Lima stands accused of a non-bailable offence and faces between 12 years and life in prison; that under the Philippine Constitution, legislators only enjoy immunity from arrest for crimes punishable by fewer than six years' imprisonment,

Considering that the President of the Senate states that justice is following its course and that not only former convicts have accused her of involvement in drug-trafficking, but also two former members of the National Bureau of Investigation. He is following her situation very closely and the Secretary General of the Senate and the official in charge of security at the Senate have visited her. The President of the Senate is looking into her security and intends to visit her as soon as possible. In response to the suggestion by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians that it undertake a visit the Philippines in connection with Senator de Lima's case, he has also stated that he would be more than pleased to welcome such a visit,

Considering that, according to the complainant, the smear campaign – which includes threats to release a purported sex video of Senator de Lima and Mr. Dayan and intimidation and accusations against Senator de Lima – is part of an attempt to derail accountability for the appalling death toll resulting from President Duterte's illegal war on drugs. During the House inquiry, Senator de Lima's address and mobile telephone number were also publicly released, a blatant violation of her rights. Senator de Lima was hounded, in particular through almost 2,000 threatening and harassing text messages, containing very foul language. Prior to her arrest, Senator de Lima revealed "heightened security threats" against her, notably "intensified monitoring", including electronic surveillance and physical surveillance by security agents,

Bearing in mind that the Philippines has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and is therefore bound to respect the right to a fair trial,

1. *Thanks* the President of the Senate for his cooperation and the information he provided;
2. *Is deeply concerned* about Senator de Lima's arrest, detention and the accusations levied against her; *fails to understand* how the accusations against her make sense, given that she has been the one taking action against the alleged drug trafficking in NBP; *considers also*, in light of the timing of the accusations, which coincide with the inquiry she launched in the Senate, and the reported public statements made by President Duterte and the Secretary of Justice, that there is serious reason to believe that she is targeted due to her outspoken criticism of the impact of the current government's policies on human rights in the Philippines;
3. *Is deeply concerned* in this regard that the statements made by President Duterte and the Secretary of Justice flout the principle of the presumption of innocence, portraying Senator de Lima as guilty before legal proceedings have even started; *considers* that their statements, first and foremost those of the Head of State, forcibly carry great weight and may put undue pressure on the course of the criminal cases;
4. *Is also concerned* about the fact that the legal proceedings on the substance of accusations appear to be going ahead, even though very important preliminary questions have yet to be resolved; and *calls on* the relevant authorities to ensure full respect for Senator de Lima's right to a fair trial, taking due account of all the facts and relevant legal provisions; *wishes* to receive the official views on this matter; *decides* to send a trial observer to the criminal proceedings should they take place;
5. *Is concerned* about the allegation that Senator de Lima was dismissed as chair and member of the Senate Committee on Justice and Human Rights for political reasons and that its report pursuant to *Senate Resolution No. 9* was not finalized in line with the applicable rules and does not take duly into account important evidence; *wishes* to receive the official views on this matter;
6. *Wishes* to receive further details on the prison conditions of Senator de Lima in the PNP custodial centre;
7. *Understands* that a complaint against Senator de Lima for "unethical behaviour" was reportedly submitted to the Senate; *wishes* to know the exact facts underpinning the complaint and the procedure that will be followed;
8. *Considers* that the issues at hand affecting one of its members should be of great concern to the Senate; *trusts* that it will do everything possible to monitor Senator de Lima's situation closely, including with regard to her right to physical integrity and a fair trial and conditions of detention;
9. *Is pleased* that the President of the Senate would welcome a visit by a delegation of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians in order to address the concerns and questions that have arisen in this case; *considers* that it is crucial that this delegation meets with the relevant parliamentary, executive and judicial authorities and Senator de Lima and her lawyers, along with any third party likely to assist it in its work; *requests* the Secretary General to make the necessary arrangements for this visit to take place as soon as possible;
10. *Requests* the Secretary General to convey this decision to the competent authorities, the complainant and any third party likely to be in a position to supply relevant information;
11. *Requests* the Committee to continue examining this case and to report back to it in due course.