



# Inter-Parliamentary Union Technical Cooperation Programme

## THEMATIC ACTIVITIES: SEMINAR ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION

(Gabon, 17-19 May 1999)



Created 1/3/2007

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Seminar for parliamentarians on the relationship between government and opposition</b>
<b>Status:</b>	<b>Closed</b>
<b>Duration:</b>	<b>3 days (17-19 May 1999)</b>
<b>Budget:</b>	<b>US \$ 111'400</b>
<b>Donor Partner:</b>	<b>United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)</b>

### Background

Worldwide political transformations during the 1990s led to several parliaments occupying centre stage in national politics. Many of the parliaments were the first, at that time, to have been put in place following truly democratic multi-party elections in these countries. A major problem which impeded the work of parliaments was the lack of proper understanding, on the part of the parliamentarians, of their role as law makers and controllers of government action. In some parliaments, the inadequate understanding of the relationship between the majority party and the opposition, for instance, had led to an impasse in the business of parliament. In many cases these relations had been acrimonious and disruptive, thus seriously hampering the smooth functioning of the parliaments in question and, sometimes, threatening to unravel the democratic system that had been put in place.

In response to requests received from a number of African parliaments, it was proposed to organise a seminar for parliamentarians in Africa as a follow-up to regional IPU seminars in Zambia and Burkina Faso in 1995 and 1996.

### Areas of activity

The seminar focused on the relationship between government and opposition parties in the conduct of the business of parliament.

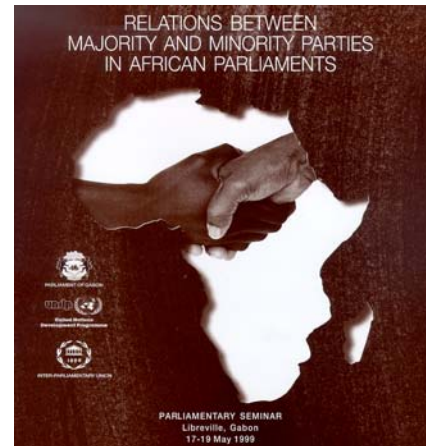
Specific topics addressed by the experts were:

- Review of the present state of relations between governing and opposition parties in Africa;
- Respective roles and responsibilities of governing and opposition parties;
- Rights and Obligations of the opposition;
- Relations between the Executive and an opposition legislature;
- The particular situation of independents and the fate of members who change party allegiance after elections;
- Consideration and adoption of model guidelines for the Rights and Responsibilities of the opposition.

### Target Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries were first and foremost the participating members of parliament, in particular those belonging to opposition parties. It was also intended to generally

contribute to the advancement of democracy that had been taking root in Africa.



### Results

The main outputs of the seminar were increased knowledge and awareness of members of parliament on their role and responsibilities but also concerning the working methods and procedures of democratic parliaments. They were thus better equipped to perform their functions in their respective parliaments and to handle conflicts between majority parties and the opposition in a democratic manner.

At the end of the seminar, the participants unanimously adopted *Guidelines for the rights and duties of the parliamentary opposition*. Likewise a declaration was adopted in which the delegates expressed their hope for further democratic progress in Africa.

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#### *Experts who took part in the seminar included:*

- Mr. Raila Oding, MP, Parliament of Kenya
- Ms. Viola Furubjelke, MP, Parliament of Sweden
- Mr Guy Carcassonne, Professor of Public Law, University of Paris X Nanterre
- Mr. Yawovi Agboyibo, President of the Comité d'Action pour le Renouveau, National Assembly of Togo
- Mr. C.E. Ndebele, Speaker of the National Assembly of Zimbabwe
- Mr. Joseph Gnonlonfoun, Minister of Justice, Benin

<sup>1</sup> Participants: Algeria, Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Lesotho, Morocco, Mauritania, Namibia, Central African Republic, Sao Tomé and Principality, Senegal and Zambia.