

IPU E-BULLETIN

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Work to Begin on Fact-Finding Mission to Syria – With a fragile ceasefire in Syria, work will begin on the sending of an IPU fact-finding mission to the Middle Eastern country to help international efforts in finding a peaceful solution to the conflict there. The mission was one of the key outcomes of a resolution passed at the 126th IPU Assembly in the Ugandan capital, Kampala, which ended on 5th April. Discussions between IPU, the Arab League, the UN and Kofi Annan, the joint UN-Arab League Special Envoy on Syria, will work out the modalities of the mission which received full backing from the Syrian parliamentary delegation to Kampala.

IPU Welcomes Developments in Mali to Restore Democracy - The swearing-in of the former speaker of the Malian parliament Dioncounda Traore as interim president of the country has been welcomed by IPU. In a statement issued at the conclusion of the 126th Assembly, IPU had called for the military junta that had seized power on 22nd March to honour its intention to relinquish power and effectively restore the Malian Republic's democratic institutions.

Eventful 126th IPU Assembly Sees Resolutions on Key Issues and New Members – Membership of IPU increased to 162 at the 126th Assembly of the Organization as South Sudan and Haiti joined the IPU. Their affiliation came as the Assembly passed several resolutions on human rights abuses of MPs around the world and on key issues of good governance, the redistribution of power and maternal health.

Among the 31 resolutions passed on human rights abuses was the call to Israel to end the practice of administrative detention which has seen nearly 20% of Palestinian legislators being held in Israeli prisons. IPU is urging Israel to end an isolation order on Palestinian MP, Ahmad Sa'adat, reportedly in poor health and held in solitary confinement for nearly three years. It reiterated its calls for his immediate release and that of fellow member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Marwan Barghouti. Concern was also expressed through resolutions adopted on human rights abuses of MPs in several countries including Cameroon and Burundi, in Colombia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Turkey.

The 126th IPU Assembly also called upon all member parliaments that have not ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to do so. It urged the IPU membership to lend support to the democratization process in the Middle East and North Africa and donors to honour their aid promises to the Arab Spring countries. A resolution on the redistribution of power included a demand for the reform of the UN Security Council and for sustainable development to be accorded the highest political priority. A final resolution on securing access to health for women and children urged parliaments to ratify various

international covenants and MPs to closely monitor the domestic implementation of human rights instruments. It also called upon parliaments to ensure adequate domestic financial resources are allocated for sexual, reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health. For full details on all resolutions, please go to <http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/stcnfres.htm#126> for English and <http://www.ipu.org/strct-f/stcnfres.htm#126> for French.

IPU Mission to Libya to Help New Parliament – IPU will shortly be sending a mission to Libya to help authorities there re-establish a fully functioning parliament. The mission follows a request made to IPU Secretary General Anders B. Johnsson by Libyan Foreign Affairs delegates to the IPU Assembly in Kampala for such assistance. This includes ways of ensuring women’s political participation. Elections to a new 200-member parliament are due to take place before the end of June. As in Egypt, where IPU is providing similar assistance, it is likely that very few of those elected will have had parliamentary experience.

Passing of Domestic Violence Bill in Maldives Big Step Forward – IPU has welcomed the passing of a domestic violence bill by parliament in the Maldives this week which will for the first time provide legal protection to victims of domestic abuse. Since 2010, IPU had been assisting in the drafting and reviewing of the bill. A government study had found one in three women between 15-49 years of age had suffered domestic abuse. The bill includes powers to investigate abuse, protective orders for victims, punishment for perpetrators violating court orders as well as psychological and rehabilitation assistance for victims and those guilty of committing abuse. The bill, which now has to be signed by President Waheed, received overwhelming cross-party support at a time when the country has been riven by political division. In addition to two IPU missions to Maldives this year to help promote a peaceful resolution to the crisis following a change in political leadership, the Organization is supporting the Maldives parliament on other legislative matters.

IPU President to Address Special Session of UNCTAD in Doha – IPU President Abdelwahad Radi will address a high-level session at the 13th UN Conference on Trade and Development taking place between 21-26 April in the Qatari capital, Doha. The President will stress the vital link between democracy and development for parliaments around the world in much the same way that trade and development are inter-linked for UNCTAD.

Lack of Political Will Result in Too Few Women in Politics Yet Again – The recent swearing in of Joyce Banda as Malawi’s first ever female head of state may have increased the number of countries with women as heads of government or heads of state to 18, but this figure and those of women MPs across the world are still worrying low, reflecting a continued lack of political will to change the status quo, according to the IPU. In its annual study on women MPs, the IPU found that the global average of female parliamentary representation had increased by just 0.5% in 2011, despite the year being marked by significant political change and democratic transformation in parts of the world. New research carried out by IPU and UN Women revealed that at the executive level too, the percentage of women ministers had also seen a modest increase from 14.2% in 2005 to 16.7% in 2012.

For further details go to: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnpersp11-e.pdf>
http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/wmnmap12_en.pdf
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