

IPU E-BULLETIN

No.12, 15 October 2012

IPU Assembly to Focus on Protecting Diversity – The need to respect and protect diversity in all its forms will be the central theme at the upcoming [127th IPU Assembly](#) hosted by the Canadian parliament in Quebec City. The protection of religious diversity in particular is one of three emergency items being proposed for IPU members to act on. Proposed by the United Arab Emirates, it also calls for an international agreement that would criminalize religious defamation. Syria and Mali have respectively proposed emergency items on the violence against Christians and other minorities in Syria and the situation in regarding institutions and security in Mali. A decision on which emergency item will be debated upon during the Assembly will be taken on the opening day.

The 127th Assembly, which takes place between 21-26 October, is expecting about 1,300 participants from more than 120 IPU member national parliaments, regional parliaments, observers and international organizations to attend. It will be formally opened by Canada's Governor General David Johnston at an inaugural ceremony involving IPU President Abdelwahad Radi, the Speakers of the two Canadian chambers Andrew Scheer and Noël A. Kinsella as well as UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson.

The event-packed Assembly will include several panel discussions on issues relating to the use of social media to enhance citizen engagement and democracy; the role of parliament in safeguarding civilian lives; building peace after conflict; fair trade and innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable development and a debate on whether the UN takes democracy seriously enough.

Several sessions led by the IPU Gender Partnership Group will lead to the adoption of a plan of action on ways to make parliaments more gender sensitive. The plan of action will tackle not just the issue of increasing the number of women in parliaments, but also within their decision-making bodies. It will similarly address the many challenges women MPs and parliamentary staff face in the working environment of a predominantly male parliament.

The IPU's Committee on Middle East Questions and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians will also be sitting during the Assembly with resolutions on various human rights cases being adopted by the Governing Council.

IPU Mission to Libya – An IPU mission to Libya has held a series of high-level meetings with Libyan authorities on how the Organization can help the North African state to rebuild a fully functioning and effective parliament. The mission follows a request made to IPU Secretary General Anders B. Johnsson by the Libyan authorities for such assistance. During the three-day mission, meetings were held with Libyan President Mohamed Yousef El-Magariaf, the acting Foreign Affairs Minister Abdel Aziz, as well as the Secretary General of and 17 MPs elected to the General National Congress earlier this summer. The mission and subsequent assistance revitalizes IPU's links and relationship with the Libyan parliament, which first joined the Organization in 1958. As a first step to assisting the GNC and MPs, IPU has provided key publications and research tools to the GNC library to help parliamentarians carry out their work.

Women Speakers Commit to New Delhi Initiative on Sensitizing Parliaments on Gender –

Women speakers of parliament from around the world have committed to doing more to increase women's representation in parliament and its formal decision-making bodies. By adopting the [New Delhi Initiative for Gender Sensitive Parliaments](#) at the end of a two-day meeting hosted by the Indian parliament early October, the group of 13 women speakers who participated in the event recognized that as speakers of parliament, they played a crucial role in spearheading efforts to make both parliaments and society more responsive to gender issues and needs. With continuing low levels of women's representation in parliament, a global average of just 20 per cent, the Initiative highlighted women's representation in parliament and its structures as a priority action. It committed the women speakers to placing gender equality high on the parliamentary agenda, improving the parliamentary working environment and undertaking initiatives to share the responsibility for gender equality with men amongst other things. A series of specific measures such as supporting electoral laws and temporary special measures to increase the number of women elected to parliament were identified. The woman speakers also looked at their role in mentoring other women, both those who are MPs or who want to be one. The New Delhi Initiative precedes a plan of action on gender sensitive parliaments to be adopted at the 127th IPU Assembly in Quebec City, Canada.

IPU Steps up Efforts to Strengthen the Palestinian Legislative Council - An IPU expert mission to the West Bank town of Ramallah will carry out a security assessment of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) this week as part of a programme of support aimed at building a modern, effective parliament for when the PLC is able to resume its functions. The Palestinian legislative body has been unable to meet since 2007 due to political tensions and the detention of a large number of Palestinian MPs in Israel, although its secretariat is still working. This week's security assessment will examine what is needed to make the PLC building a safe forum for MPs, parliamentary staff, media and the public to interact.

It follows another IPU expert mission last week focusing on how to improve the PLC's internal rules and practices in a bid to help it adopt more fluid and transparent working methods, strengthen its law-making and oversight functions and increase its accountability. The mission will also help clarify the rights and responsibilities of MPs and their relation to government. Both missions are part of an IPU-UNDP programme of support for the PLC.

Supporting Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, New IPU Handbook for MPs -

A new [IPU Handbook on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament](#) offers a practical tool for parliamentarians on taking action to curb the arms race and reduce nuclear threats. The Handbook, *Supporting Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament*, was developed with experts from the World Future Council and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (PNND). It is the latest step in IPU's commitment to advance nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation by supporting MPS in their work to protect their citizens and future generations. Parliaments have an essential role to play in ridding the world of nuclear weapons, by enacting legislation and ratifying treaties, controlling military spending and reviewing national security doctrines. However, with the issue often remote from an MP's daily agenda, the Handbook brings disarmament down to earth for every MP with more than 70 recommendations on taking action in their respective countries. It will be officially launched at the 127th IPU Assembly in Quebec City in Canada at a special plenary event attended amongst others by the head of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) Tibor Toth.