

# IPU E-BULLETIN

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**Priority Assistance to Libya's General National Congress** - IPU will start delivering priority assistance to the Libyan General National Congress (GNC) next week as a new constitution for the country is due to be drafted and adopted before legislative elections can take place.

Three parliamentary experts specialised in constitutional and legislative matters as well as parliamentary processes will be in Tripoli on 18-25 January to work with the GNC's 200 members, including 30 women, and its new Secretary-General and staff. They will assist the body to finalize its rules of procedures and provide advice on the drafting of a new constitution. In particular, they will help clarify the GNC's role in the process and support planning, organisation and outreach to the Libyan population around the event.

The experts will also help the GNC and its Secretariat assess what it needs now and after the transition to a future permanent assembly, to effectively carry out its legislative and oversight functions. IPU will develop a full assistance strategy with short to long-term activities based on their findings.

It is the first phase of a wide-ranging programme of assistance IPU will carry out in Libya following the signing of a high-level agreement last month between the GNC and IPU as the North African country continues its road to democracy.

**IPU Welcomes Breakthrough in Women's Political Participation in Saudi Arabia** - IPU has welcomed the decision by Saudi Arabia to put in place a 20 per cent quota for women in the country's parliament - the Shura Council, and the immediate appointment of 30 women to the 151-member advisory body. The move makes the Gulf country the fourth highest in the Arab region in terms of women's political participation in parliament, according to [IPU data on women in parliament](#).

IPU has been closely monitoring the progressive opening of political life to women in Saudi Arabia. Until the announcement last September by King Abdullah to give women the right to vote, stand for election in municipal elections and be appointed to the Shura Council, the Gulf country remained the only country in the world where women remained excluded from the political process.

"IPU welcomed the initial announcement last year as a historic moment. Today's decision is another step forward not just on women's political rights but also in helping to transform parliament into a more representative and responsive body for the Saudi people as a whole," says IPU Secretary General Anders B. Johnsson. Read the [press release](#).

**IPU Mission Supports Egypt on Parliamentary Election Law** - An IPU expert mission to Egypt last week worked with authorities there on revising a law governing parliamentary elections ahead of new polls for the lower house of parliament in the coming weeks. It is part of on-going IPU support to Egypt in efforts to build a democratic society.

The team of experts specializing in electoral processes and women's political participation provided advice on a range of issues including putting in place the most reliable measures to elect a greater number of women to the Egyptian parliament.

Egypt currently has only 15 women MPs, representing 2.0 percent of the total number of parliamentarians. Quotas and reserved seats are often the most effective ways to ensure a more representative parliament. The Egyptian parliament is amending the law governing parliamentary elections after a new constitution was approved last month.

Read the [press note](#).

**Bahrain, DRC and Maldives on Table as IPU Committee on Human Rights of MPs Meets** - The human rights abuses of MPs in Bahrain, Maldives and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are among cases examined by IPU's Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, meeting in Geneva this week.

The five-day session will include a hearing with parliamentary authorities in Bahrain on the case of Matar Ebrahim Matar and Jawad Fairuz Ghuloom on allegations of arbitrary arrest, detention and ill-treatment. The Committee will follow-up on the findings of an IPU human rights mission to Maldives carried out last November to gather first hand evidence on allegations of ill-treatment, detention and harassment of 19 opposition MPs. The human rights body will also seek further action on the cases of two opposition MPs from the DRC, Eugène Diomi Ndongala and Pierre Jacques Chalupa.

83 cases concerning 233 parliamentarians in 39 countries from across the world have been lodged before the Committee involving disappearances, breach of freedom of expression, harassment, politically motivated criminal charges, unlawful arrests and detention and other human rights abuses.

Read the [press note](#).