

IPU E-BULLETIN

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1. **Aung San Suu Kyi to Address British Parliament as IPU Continues Work in Myanmar**
2. **West African Parliaments to Consolidate Efforts to End Child Trafficking and Labour**
3. **MPs at Rio+20 to Examine How Agreement on Sustainable Development Can be Made to Work**
4. **IPU Welcomes Release of Former Burundian MP**

Aung San Suu Kyi to Address British Parliament as IPU Continues Work in Myanmar –As Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi addresses both houses of the British parliament on 21 June as part of a five-nation visit to Europe, another IPU expert mission will have begun work in Myanmar to help authorities there to establish a modern parliamentary library and research facility.

The mission is the latest in a series planned during the year aimed at supporting Myanmar in its transition to parliamentary democracy. It follows an IPU needs assessment carried out in May which highlighted, amongst other things, the urgent need for a comprehensive library and research facility to aid MPs in their daily work. This latest mission will determine library and research needs and how they will be met.

In addition, the IPU team composed of two experts from the Australian and Israeli parliaments will train Myanmar's parliamentary library staff on how best to provide library and research services to MPs. This will be critical as the next parliamentary session is due to begin in July. The IPU needs assessment took note of the large number of new legislation already adopted on democratic and economic reform as well as amendments to many other existing laws on a range of issues in the short life of parliament so far. It noted that the Myanmar parliament was emerging as a driver of change in the country with plans for much more legislation in the pipeline.

IPU is urging the international community to provide the necessary support to Myanmar in the transition to parliamentary democracy, in particular to the parliament. The Organization itself is seeking funding for its long-term support programme to the Myanmar parliament.

West African Parliaments Consolidate Efforts to End Child Trafficking and Labour – MPs from West and Central Africa as well as representatives from the ECOWAS parliament have taken further steps to consolidate action on child trafficking and labour in the region at a seminar organized by IPU, the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC-OECD) and the ECOWAS parliament.

Participants urged national parliaments to ratify international agreements and conventions on the issues and do whatever is needed to implement them. In a joint ECOWAS and IPU Declaration, MPs reiterated the need to intensify efforts to fight child trafficking and labour. They also called on IPU to support parliaments in their work to combat such exploitation.

The Declaration underscored the need for an IPU-SWAC/OECD regional programme to continue and support parliaments in the creation of a regional legal framework to tackle the issue.

The three-day seminar which began on World Day against Child Labour on 12 June was part of a Belgian funded initiative to strengthen parliamentary efforts to end child exploitation in West Africa. The region is marked by child trafficking for labour in many industries including fishing, agriculture, mining, begging and domestic service. Child labour in general affects many millions of children across the region. One study in Ghana in 2001 reported that 20 per cent of children aged between 5-17 years were engaged in various forms of child labour, including agriculture. Child labour exploitation on cocoa farms has been especially highlighted in recent years with several hundred thousands of children working on cocoa farms in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon and Côte d'Ivoire.

MPs at Rio+20 to Examine How Agreement on Sustainable Development Can be Made to Work – MPs attending the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in the Brazilian city of Rio de Janeiro will examine what role national parliaments can play in making work any new international agreement on the issue. The MPs, part of national delegations to the Conference, will participate in a briefing organized by IPU on the opening day of the event, which takes place 20 years after the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. The briefing will not only review the extent to which a new agreement acknowledges a clear role for parliament, but also any key provisions on establishing new sustainable development goals.

The UN Conference aims to recapture the vision of the original Rio Conference of 1992 and reposition national and international policies on a more aggressive course towards sustainable development. It will focus on the development of a green economy in efforts to eradicate poverty and on the creation of a new institutional framework for sustainable development.

IPU Welcomes Release of Former Burundian MP – IPU has welcomed the acquittal of former Burundian MP Pasteur Mpawenayo early this month after nearly four years in jail. Mpawenayo, whose case had been adopted by the IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, was arrested in 2008 and charged with being an accomplice of Hussein Radjabu, former president of the ruling party CNDD-FDD, in a plot to undermine State security. An IPU Human Rights mission to Burundi last year and a resolution on on-going human rights cases in the East African country at the IPU's 126th Assembly had urged an imminent closure to the case thought to be politically motivated. It had also reiterated calls for IPU's access to the case files on Mpawenayo and two other MPs, Gérard Nkurunziza and Deo Nshirimana. There has been great concern over pre-trial detention and the slow pace of proceedings against the former MPs, in particular Mpawenayo, who at times has been held in extremely poor prison conditions and without proper medical care. Following his acquittal, IPU is interested in knowing how that affects Hussein Radjabu who was found guilty of the same charges and who is currently serving a 13-year prison sentence.