



Activities of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2009



Inter-Parliamentary Union – 2010



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The IPU at 120

In 2009, the IPU celebrated 120 years of existence. From its late 19th century origins, the Organization has evolved with the times. It is the closest the world has to a global parliamentary assembly. Its membership comprises almost all the parliaments of the world. With delegations representing the broad political spectrum in parliaments, the IPU offers an unrivalled perspective on global political trends and opinions.

The IPU is first and foremost a political organization. It provides a space for public political debate on major issues facing humanity. It also offers myriad opportunities for private bilateral exchanges and networking. This report describes the activities that took place during 2009. As can be seen, the crises engulfing the globe took up the greater part of the Members' attention over the year.

The IPU is also an organization that promotes and defends democracy in a number of practical, action-oriented ways. It develops standards for democratic parliaments; it helps build strong parliamentary institutions; it promotes and defends human rights; it is an ardent supporter of gender equality and defender of women's rights; it fashions tools and builds capacity in parliament to address a multitude of issues, ranging from peace and security to development.

2009 saw the IPU taking this work several steps further. During the year, the IPU promoted a new self-assessment toolkit which was quickly put to use by parliaments; it launched a campaign to end violence against women; it published two new parliamentary handbooks on human rights; it initiated work to bring greater transparency and accountability through parliaments to financial and economic policies.

Throughout the year, the IPU has brought a parliamentary contribution to international cooperation. It is the global parliamentary counterpart of the United Nations. This report gives ample examples of the many and varied activities which the IPU carried out in 2009 in close cooperation with the United Nations and in support of the United Nations Charter.

2009 closes another chapter in history, the first decade of the third millennium. Today's world is profoundly different from the one in which the IPU came into being. In many ways, it is a much smaller world; it is also one that lives at a totally different pace. It is a world that requires international, quasi instantaneous cooperation on a scale never seen before. And precisely because of that, it is also a world where there is a need for a vibrant IPU.



Anders B. Johnsson
IPU Secretary General



A world in crisis

The IPU leads by example. It is often at the forefront of major issues facing the global community. The multiple crises engulfing the world in 2009 were no exception. The financial crisis, food insecurity and climate change have all been under IPU scrutiny in previous years, and together they provided a major focus for the IPU throughout 2009.

The financial and economic crisis and its impact on development became an item on the agenda of the 120th IPU Assembly in April. The following month, over three hundred members of parliament took part in the IPU parliamentary conference on the global economic crisis held in Geneva. Later in the year, during the 121st Assembly, the IPU took stock of the evolution of the crisis.

There is a lot more that each of us could do individually to overcome our current problems. The basic fact remains that the economic and financial crisis is a global problem which requires a global solution. In the case of Africa, we have had no role in the genesis of the crisis and are mere victims of its global reach.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia at the opening of the 120th IPU Assembly

Much of this work was carried out in close cooperation with the United Nations system. The IPU hosted the Commission of Experts of the President of the United Nations General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System (see photo). The IPU contributed to the United Nations Conference on the World Financial Crisis and its Impact on Development. The economic crisis and its ramifications were also the subject of the Joint UN-IPU Parliamentary Hearing held during the UN General Assembly.



The debates served to heighten understanding and share experiences on policies and programmes to redress the crisis, and - more than anything - to hammer home the message that something must be done to help both the most vulnerable people in society and the countries hardest hit. They did not cause the crisis and should not have to bear its cost.

The debates cast light on the need for more and better governance. The State has to assume a more assertive part in the process. The financial system must be subject to tighter control. There must be much more accountability within and over the banking system.

The parliamentarians also called for international financial institutions to be better attuned to citizens' aspirations. The debate over the broader governance of these institutions should not be reduced to a discussion about voting rights. It must lead to these institutions becoming more responsive to people's needs, opening them up to greater parliamentary scrutiny and support.

The crisis concerns much more than the workings of the finance and banking system. Employment should be central to the debate. The health of the world economy should not be measured as a function of stock market recovery, but rather in terms of its ability to provide jobs and employment.

As the crisis played out, the IPU mobilized a parliamentary presence at two major United Nations conferences on food and climate change. The world was still facing a food crisis, the parliamentarians were told as they meet on the eve of the World Summit on Food Security in Rome, but it was not merely a crisis of production. Food security also entails problems of distribution, affordability, and quality and nutritional diversity.

The crisis surrounding food impinges on social inequalities and poverty, and the marginalization of women and gender inequality. As with so many other areas, it is also affected by insecurity and conflict, and programme effectiveness and corruption.

Parliamentarians can act to improve the outlook in many ways. The debate pinpointed several of them. Adopting legal frameworks and laws that protect the right to food and make sure that the needs of the most vulnerable in society are met is one. Making sure that there is a comprehensive national strategy in place to ensure food for all is another.

Equally, members of parliament can help women to gain the initiative by, for example, adopting entitlement laws that cover women's access to land, credit and markets. The MPs were also encouraged to examine agricultural policies from a climate change perspective and promote policies and methods with less severe ecological impact. And it is of course in the budget debate in parliament that agricultural development can be given the priority it deserves.

Members of parliament descended in large numbers on the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in December and - convened by the IPU and the Danish Parliament - several hundred of them attended a one-day Meeting in the Folketing.

The debate identified a broad agenda for parliamentary action extending beyond the confines of COP15. Climate change is also geared to other intractable issues of our times, including food insecurity and the water crisis. Parliaments and the executive branch have different responsibilities when it comes to international negotiations and climate change is no exception. Governments negotiate rules and arrangements on behalf of States. The parliamentarians felt that there was a need for a greater understanding of parliament's role to scrutinize government action, influence policies pursued in intergovernmental negotiations, ratify international agreements, and implement them through appropriate legislation and budget allocations.

The debate served to identify many initiatives members of parliament can take to reinforce that role. Assessing all bills before parliament from the perspective of their impact on climate change was one example. They also proposed indicators against which parliaments can measure progress in government climate change programmes. Another recommendation was to ensure that legislation relating to climate change was particularly sensitive to the needs of the vulnerable. In all, the participants identified an ambitious agenda for parliamentary action beyond COP15.

The outcome of all of these conferences and the endless hours of negotiations that went in to their preparation can at best be described as modest. To some extent, this is to do with the nature of the problem. At their most fundamental level, these crises concern issues of morals and ethics, for they all touch on the kind of society we want to live in.

We can do more. We must do more. For the economic hurricane that is sweeping the world is also a herald of opportunity. It is a time to think afresh, it is a moment for one of those revolutions in the human imagination that sows new ideas: new thinking on how to make more and better jobs for women and men, spread the world's riches more equitably, and work for the good and not the detriment of our planet. And we will only do this if women are working on a par with men to find solutions.

Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, IPU President

At a bare minimum, the response must be one in which the global community eschews business as usual in favour of a better equilibrium between the voice of society, the role of the State and the dynamics of the market. This is an undertaking that has barely begun. It concerns the fundamentals of public policy that need to be addressed in parliament.

Crisis in the Middle East

2009 started with a war in the Middle East. The Israeli Defense Force carried out a military operation in Gaza for 22 days over the New Year.

The President of the IPU went to the region and saw evidence of extensive destruction in Gaza (see photo). His mission included visits to Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian territories on the West Bank, and Oman. Dr. Gurirab held talks with the President of the Palestinian Authority, a number of Palestinian political leaders and members of Parliament. He attended the international conference in Sharm El-Sheikh in support of the Palestinian economy for the reconstruction of Gaza and met many of the foreign leaders who were there. He also had lengthy meetings with many of the Speakers of the Arab Parliaments and benefited from their insights.



Following the general elections in Israel, the IPU President paid a separate visit to that country later in the year. He met with leaders in government and parliament and also toured the south of Israel, which had been hit by missile attacks from Gaza.

Throughout his visits, the IPU President repeated the same message. It is imperative to end the vicious cycle of violence and suffering and start serious negotiations. Ostracism, condemnations and boycotts are not going to end the conflict; only an inclusive process will achieve that objective.

The President made several suggestions for action the IPU could take in support of peace efforts, in particular by facilitating political dialogue. The IPU Committee on Middle East Questions was encouraged to re-establish direct dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian lawmakers and it took initial steps to that end during the 121st IPU Assembly. The Committee was also invited to monitor the peace process more closely and prepare a report for the IPU membership

Reporting to the IPU membership during the 122nd IPU Assembly, the President of the IPU voiced a word of caution. They all shared a huge responsibility, he declared; the parties to the conflict, and the international community at large. The point of exhaustion was not far away. They risked losing not only their ability to solve the conflict, but also their will to do so.

Those who would suffer the consequences of that were the Palestinian people and the people of Israel. It was a duty for them to start building peace; to end the sterile confrontation; to break the cycle of recrimination and condemnation; to recognize their common humanity and shared heritage; to let reason and morality prevail. It was too easy, he concluded, to revert to old habits. To denounce, accuse, point fingers, and express anger. That would not bring peace and prosperity to the people of Israel and Palestine. Only by working together in a constructive spirit could they hope to achieve that most important of objectives.



Peace and security

Peace and international cooperation are the two building blocks of the IPU. The organization was born at a time in history when an influential group of members of parliament were calling on States to submit their disputes to international arbitration as an alternative to settling their differences through the use of force.

They made their case in parliamentary debates and they established the IPU to help them marshal international cooperation in the service of peace. Little wonder then that so much of IPU's activities over the years have been devoted to promoting peace and security. Every Assembly offers multiple opportunities to advance the cause of peace and 2009 was no exception.

At the 120th Assembly delegates pursued earlier debates on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. They called for action to secure the early entry into force of the comprehensive nuclear test-ban treaty and advocated support for the UN Secretary-General's Five Point Proposal on the UN and security in a nuclear-free world. They drew up a catalogue of action for parliaments and governments to pursue in support of nuclear security.

At the following Assembly, delegates started addressing another major threat to international peace and security, namely organized crime. This was one area, delegates noted, where national legislation and response mechanisms moved at a snail's pace, compared to the speed with which new and ever more aggressive forms of organized crime developed.

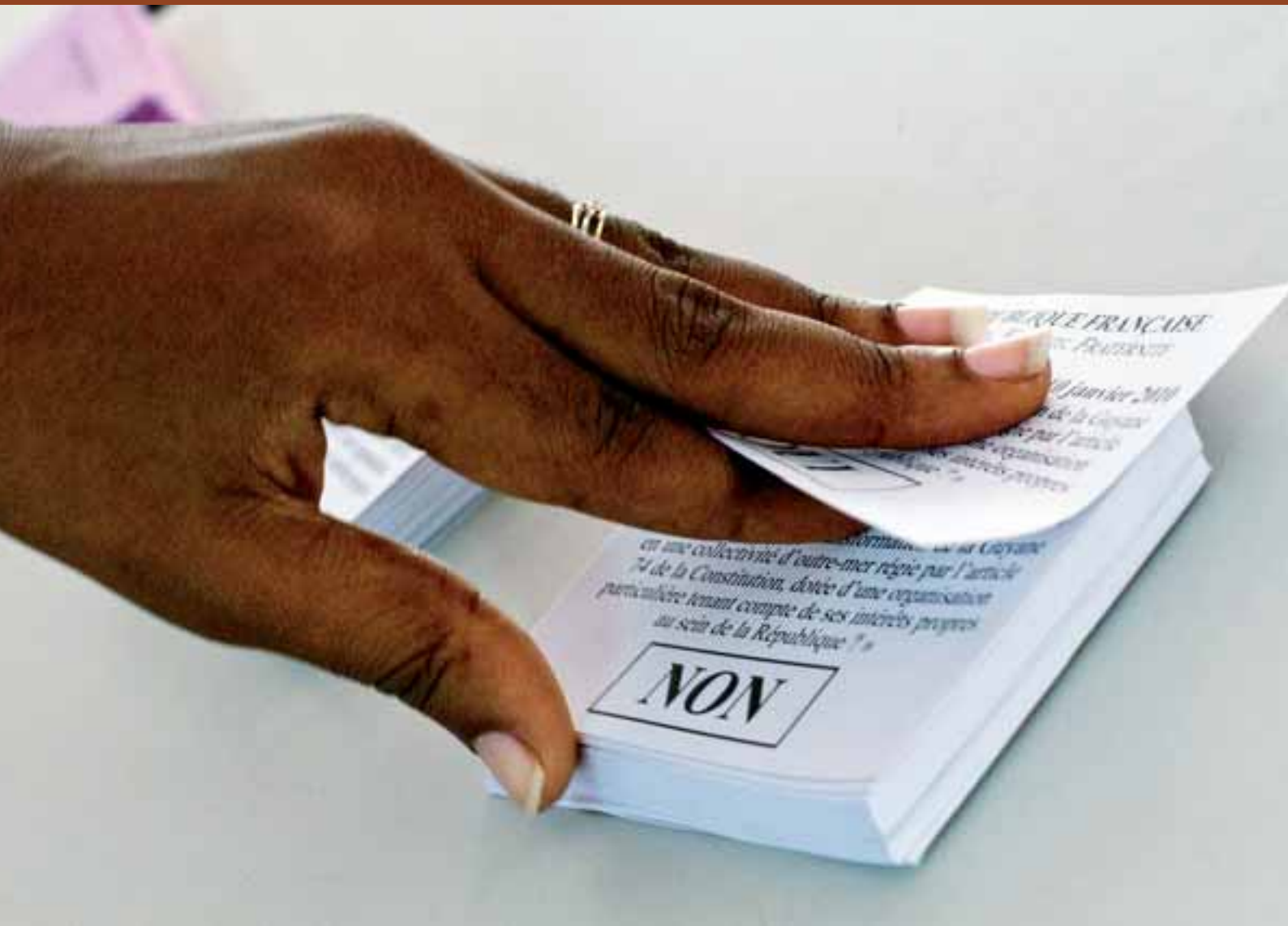
The initial discussion pointed to an urgent need to overcome widespread indifference towards the victims of organized crime and to disseminate knowledge of the good practices and innovative legislation developed by many parliaments. The debate will be pursued in 2010 when it is expected that the IPU can issue a comprehensive set of recommendations for parliamentary action and a strategic approach to the fight against organized crime.

The IPU Assemblies also provided opportunities for direct political negotiation, an exercise which has come to be known as parliamentary diplomacy in recognition of the fact that members of parliament can often help to open avenues for pursuing peace agreements.

The IPU continued its support for the Alliance of Civilizations, an initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General which aims to improve understanding and cooperative relations among nations and peoples across cultures and religions, and to help counter the forces that fuel polarization and extremism. It was represented at the second annual forum of the Alliance that took place in Istanbul on the eve of the 120th Assembly and brought a parliamentary contribution to the proceedings.

Much of IPU's work in this area is inspired by the far-reaching recommendations that Member parliaments issued in 2007 when discussing what parliaments can do to ensure respect for and peaceful co-existence between religious communities and beliefs.

Of course, much of the work of the IPU in the course of any year is undertaken in the service of peace. Subsequent chapters of this report offer numerous examples: building strong, democratic and representative institutions, facilitating reconciliation and peace-building, fostering greater political tolerance, defending human rights, promoting gender equality, advocating and facilitating development: these all contribute to building stable societies that can live together in peace.



Democracy

Parliaments are complex institutions. They are composed of men and women from all walks of life, representing different constituencies and often competing political parties and philosophies. Together, they are mandated to legislate and hold government accountable to the people. They are assisted by a parliamentary administration set up to service parliament and its members.

All parliaments face similar challenges: an expanding legislative agenda, the growing influence of globalization, centres of power increasingly operating outside government, ever more intricate and technical issues requiring attention, and an extensive regulatory framework, all of which make it more difficult to legislate and ensure accountability.

Pressure of time with demand for immediate responses to complex questions makes the task of parliament still more difficult. It is also true that parliaments and parliamentarians are held in low esteem by citizens in most countries. The challenges are even more daunting for parliaments working against a backdrop of conflict, or in its aftermath.

Small wonder, then, that parliaments are constantly under pressure to improve their performance.

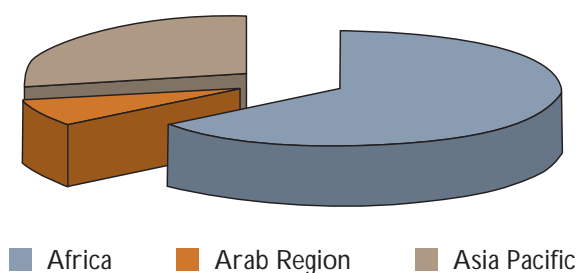
For some it may be a question of capacity-building - setting up an adequate parliamentary administration and providing training to the staff. Capacity-building is also needed for members of parliament; especially the large numbers of men and women who are elected to parliament for the first time.

For others the stakes are more fundamental. They may involve changing rules and procedures to make sure that members of the opposition can participate in parliamentary work in a meaningful manner. Or it may be a matter of making parliament more effective by improving its interaction with the public - becoming more accessible, transparent and accountable.

Invariably, parliaments have to embrace modernity and, in the process, make better use of modern information and communication technology. And, equally invariably, their resources are too scarce and their operating budgets inadequate. Today many parliaments still do not enjoy budgetary independence.

The IPU's role in all of this is obvious. It devotes a major part of its time and resources to assisting parliaments. 2009 was no exception. The IPU provided advice, guidance, and technical support in Cambodia, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Liberia, Maldives, Pakistan, Palestine, Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Viet Nam. Many of these projects are being conducted in cooperation with UNDP.

Strengthening parliaments 2009
27 activities in support of 14 parliaments

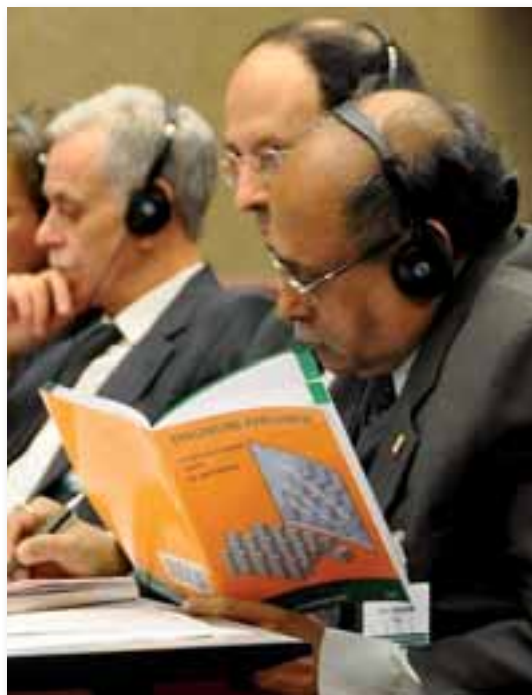


Institution building, standards and self-assessments

While parliaments are increasingly attentive to the way in which they carry out their representative, legislative and oversight functions, they are also seeking ways to enhance often dwindling public confidence in parliamentarians and the institution in general. Periodic and meaningful evaluation of parliament can be salutary. All evaluations share the goal of entrenching parliament as the central institution of democracy and ensuring its continuing relevance in the twenty-first century. In grasping this theme, a conference in October bringing together the IPU, the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament and other partners took a close look at the new IPU self-assessment toolkit for parliaments.

The IPU toolkit is built around the assumption that the evaluation will be conducted internally by parliamentarians. Since parliamentary evaluation implies that parliamentarians are required to change the way they work, it stands to reason that parliamentarians themselves should conduct the assessment. The toolkit, systematic in nature, was developed from a major endeavour to examine the question of what constituted a democratic parliament, and lends practical shape to the methods set out in the handbook entitled *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century*. It breaks the evaluation down into six sections: the representativeness of parliament; parliamentary oversight of the executive; parliament's legislative capacity; the transparency and accessibility of parliament; the accountability of parliament; and parliament's involvement in international policy. Each section comprises a list of questions to which the respondents are invited to provide an assessment on a five-point scale, ranging from very good to very poor.

To date, the IPU toolkit has been used by the parliaments in Australia, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Ireland, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and South Africa. The toolkit has been used in different ways according to the needs of each parliament, but has typically been part of a process designed to improve the functioning of parliament and has led to the creation of a strategic plan for the parliament. It has also become a key feature in the programmes that the IPU delivers in building capacities in parliaments.



Reconciliation

In countries blighted by war and conflict, parliamentarians have an essential role in ensuring that all people in society have a say in the construction of the country's future. The legislature must have a voice in framing the institutions that will come into being after the conflict. Indeed, long after the combatants have laid down their arms, those institutions, and more particularly the parliament, will continue to need careful nurturing.

In order to discuss these premises for the promotion of peaceful and sustainable societies in the South-East Asia region, the Parliament of Cambodia joined the IPU in inviting parliamentarians to Phnom Penh in March. Much had been achieved in the region in the last decade to entrench peace and stability, but the meeting found that pockets of conflict and tension remained and that continued national action, regional cooperation and assistance from the international community were all critical to finding lasting solutions.

On another continent, in May, a distance learning course was given by IPU and the World Bank Institute to parliaments in post-conflict African countries. Beneficiaries were the parliaments of Liberia and Sierra Leone and the South Sudan Legislative Assembly. The IPU also carried out several missions to explore possible IPU support to reconciliation in Zimbabwe in the context of the General Political Agreement signed by the ZANU-PF and the MDC in 2007. It continued work in Burundi to ensure inclusive decision-making in parliament as a means of entrenching the Parliament as a forum for national reconciliation.

Reconciliation seminars took place in three other countries shaken by past fighting: Sierra Leone, to consider reforms in parliament and in particular enhance the role and duties of the opposition and devise programmes to foster the wellbeing of marginalized groups such as youth; Rwanda, to take stock of the reconciliation process and promote the dissemination of the laws on national reconciliation and human rights; and Uganda, where recommendations included setting up a national reconciliation conference, making political reforms, and establishing a law to regulate disarmament.

Reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict requires that careful attention be given to ensuring that the armed forces and the security sector in general are under civilian control. To this end, the IPU has developed a productive partnership with the Geneva-based Centre for the Democratic Control of the Armed Forces (DCAF). In December, the National Assembly of Kenya, the IPU and DCAF held a regional seminar in Nairobi to look at the challenges facing the security agenda in the wider Great Lakes region. The parliamentarians discussed the advantages of a regional approach to peace and stability which could be put into practice through the work of the Amani Parliamentary Forum, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and its recently established parliamentary wing, and the IPU and DCAF. They pinpointed obstacles barring the path to effective national parliamentary oversight of the security sector and made ten key recommendations to help clear the hurdles.

Political tolerance

Political tolerance is essential to democracy and hence to parliament. Without political tolerance democracy becomes a sham and parliaments cannot function. Political tolerance means accepting and respecting the basic rights and civil liberties of persons and groups whose viewpoints differ from one's own. In parliament, this means allowing the opposition room to express its views, and letting all members speak freely without fear of punishment.

Throughout 2009, the IPU carried out a range of activities to promote political tolerance. It re-issued the 1999 Guidelines on the Rights and Duties of the Opposition in Parliament. It also commissioned a global survey of public opinion on democracy. The poll covered 24 countries representing 64 per cent of the world's population. The poll found that there was much aspiration across the world for more democracy,



as the only system of government that could provide better advancement of peoples' fundamental rights and freedoms, but at the same time many people were sceptical about the way democracy was working in practice.

Parliaments should be preoccupied with the gulf that separates public aspirations for democratic governance and vigorous public debate, and the widely-held perception of political life as a closed space where there is little room for dissent and real consideration of alternative policy options. I urge all parliaments and their Speakers, Presidents and presiding officers to act decisively to enhance political tolerance.

Dr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, IPU President

Large majorities responded that people in their country were not completely free to express unpopular views, that opposition parties did not get a fair chance to influence government policies and that legislators had limited freedom to express views that differed from those of their political party.

Also in 2009, the IPU presented preliminary findings from a study that it is conducting to obtain a deeper understanding of the situation regarding political party control over the parliamentary mandate. The power of political parties to revoke the parliamentary mandate and the implications of "political party dictatorship" are real problems which require discussion and action. The first draft of the study is nearing completion.

The IPU also held a Parliamentary Conference on Democracy in Africa that was hosted by the Parliament of Botswana to mark the International Day of Democracy. Apart from looking at the fundamental principles of democracy and discussing political tolerance, the conference served to promote parliaments' engagement with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, encourage action by them to ensure ratification and internalize its provisions in domestic legislation and practice.

International Day of Democracy

In November 2007, the United Nations General Assembly declared 15 September the International Day of Democracy. The second celebration of the day took place in 2009 and was observed by parliaments in all regions of the world.

Parliaments in Armenia, Bahrain, Canada, Mexico, Switzerland and many other countries issued public statements. The Parliament in Bangladesh organized a one-day debate on democracy and political tolerance, whereas both Chambers of the Parliament in Ethiopia held a three day public seminar on different aspects of democracy.

In Bhutan and Cambodia, the Parliaments organized debates with the support of UNDP. Other parliaments held round tables. Some parliaments, like that in Finland, opened their doors to expose a broader public to the workings of parliament and democracy. In India, the parliamentary TV station was enlisted to make special broadcasts on issues of democracy.

For the second year running, the Parliament in Greece organized a drawing and essay contest for all primary and secondary school children in the country. An essay contest was also launched in Uruguay, where both Houses of Parliament held an extraordinary session to mark the International Day of Democracy.

Ninety-eight participants from different youth organisations in Zambia participated in a National Youth Parliament session, and its representatives shared their resolutions and issues with the parliamentary committee that deals with issues of governance. The Lebanese Parliament, in collaboration with the UNDP, also organized meetings between citizens and parliamentarians.

A more extensive list of parliamentary events can be found at www.ipu.org/dem-e/idd/events.htm.



Parliaments - Guardians of Human Rights

Parliaments are rooted in human rights. Parliament gives practical expression to the fundamental right of all people to take part in government through freely chosen representatives. Without parliaments, the will of the people would not underpin the authority of government. Freedom of opinion and expression are at the core of the parliamentary mandate. Without freedom of speech, members of parliament cannot exercise their elected mandate.

Parliaments provide the foundations of human rights. The earliest bill of rights, *Habeas Corpus* and similar declarations on human rights were all conceived in parliament. Legislative bills that convert human rights into legally enforceable standards for every man, woman and child have all been adopted in parliament. And every parliament has a duty to oversee the functioning of government, monitor the enforcement of laws and help ensure the proper administration of justice.

I was jailed for standing up for what I believed in: democracy, good governance and the rule of law. At that time, I was little known and had few friends, especially abroad, willing and able to help me. But the IPU was a friend. The IPU stood up for me. The IPU used its good offices to lobby for my release.

Mohamed Nasheed, President of the Republic of Maldives.

The IPU promotes human rights by working to ensure respect for the human rights of members of parliament and to strengthen parliament's ability to protect and uphold human rights.

The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians - founded in 1976 - spearheads the effort to uphold the human rights of members of parliament. In 2009, the Committee worked on 77 cases in 34 countries concerning 436 parliamentarians. By far the largest number of cases concerned members of parliament who had been improperly and unduly banned from the political stage. There were even cases in which not merely individual parliamentarians but the entire opposition was prevented from exercising its parliamentary mandate. There were also many cases involving lack of due process, arbitrary arrest and detention, and undue restriction of freedom of speech.

In defence of members of parliament

On 27 January 2005, Shah Ams Kibria was killed in a grenade attack during a political meeting he was attending. Mr. Kibria, a former United Nations senior official, was a leading member of the opposition in Bangladesh at the time (pictured with current Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed, whose case was also before the IPU Committee).



On 25 December 2005, Mr. Joseph Pararajasingham was assassinated while attending Christmas mass with his wife. Mr. Pararajasingham was a member of the Parliament of Sri Lanka and a prominent human rights defender in his country.

On 28 July 2006, Abdalla Derow Isak was killed by gunmen as he stepped out of the mosque after prayer. Mr. Isak was a former Speaker of the Transitional Federal Parliament of Somalia.

On 13 June 2007, Mr. Walid Eido lost his life in an explosion in Beirut. Mr. Eido was a member of the Parliament of Lebanon.

What is common to the assassinations of these and many other members of parliament is the fact that the culprits have not been identified: neither the instigators nor the perpetrators. The IPU Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians continues to work with the authorities in these countries in an effort to combat impunity and ensure that justice is done.

Persistence pays. In 2008, the Honduran judicial authorities handed down a final sentence for the man who had assassinated Miguel Angel Pavón Salazar in 1988. Mr. Pavón Salazar was a member of the Honduran Congress and the IPU Committee had played a role in ensuring that the murderer was eventually identified, apprehended and tried.

Similarly, another longstanding case on the books of the Committee was solved in 2009 in Turkey where the judicial authorities tried and sentenced those responsible for killing Mr. Mehmet Sinçar. Mr. Sinçar, who was a member of the Turkish Parliament from the Kurdish minority, was assassinated in September 1993.

Not all cases before the Committee involve murder. And some are resolved, in part through the actions taken by the Committee. In two particularly severe cases, however, there has been no solution.

One of them concerns eleven members of parliament from Eritrea. They were detained on 18 September 2001 under accusations of conspiracy and attempting to overthrow the government. They have not been formally charged; nor have they been tried or sentenced. Their whereabouts are unknown. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights urges the State of Eritrea to order their immediate release and provide them with compensation. The IPU Committee has sought access to the members of parliament to no avail.

The second concerns thirteen members of the Parliament of Myanmar who are still behind bars. They were elected to parliament in May 1990. Some of them have been in prison almost ever since. The IPU Committee is urging the authorities of Myanmar to release them. The Committee points out that there can be no truly free and fair elections in Myanmar if political prisoners are in jail and prevented from participating in the political process.

Almost every country in the world has pledged to uphold basic human rights standards set forth in international conventions which they have adopted, signed and ratified. Many such instruments include international mechanisms to monitor State compliance with the treaty obligations. Governments submit periodic reports on implementation and receive comments and recommendations from the international committee that monitors compliance.

The IPU complements this international system of human rights protection through four types of complementary actions.

It provides technical support and capacity-building to national parliaments in the area of human rights. Almost every national institution-building project carried out by the IPU now contains a human rights and a gender component to this effect.

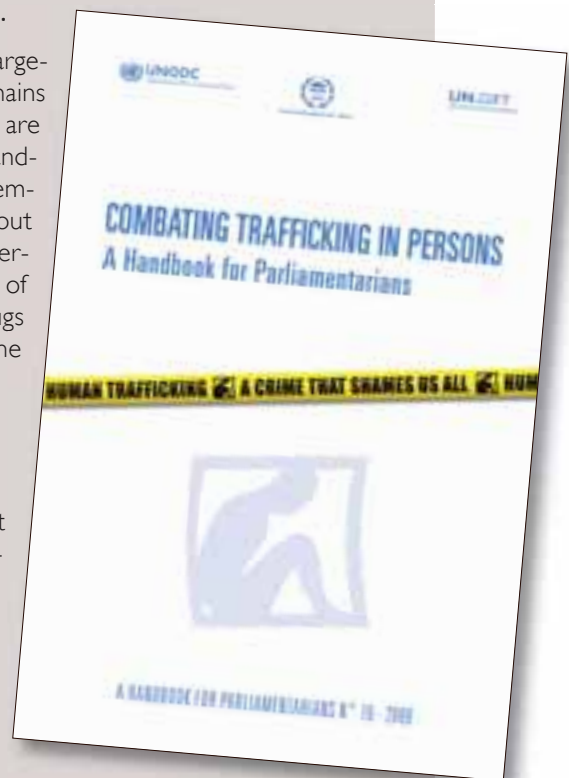
The IPU also produces didactical tools which explain the content of the relevant human rights conventions. They are issued in the form of parliamentary handbooks and so far a total of 17 have been produced.

Handbook 16 - Combating trafficking in persons.

Although the transatlantic slave trade was brought to an end largely through a campaign run by parliamentarians, slavery remains with us today. Millions of people, usually women and children, are trapped in a modern form called human trafficking. The handbook compiles a host of measures parliaments and their members can take to set the victims of trafficking free and stamp out the crime. The handbook was presented to the IPU membership in early 2009 at the 120th IPU Assembly in the presence of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which had teamed up with the IPU to produce the volume.

Handbook 17 - Missing persons.

Hundreds of thousands of families affected by armed conflict or internal violence remain in the dark about the fate of disappeared friends and relatives. The handbook aims to help parliaments promote coherent national policies to resolve the problem of people going missing, to better assist victims' families, and to prevent further disappearances. The handbook was produced in cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and was presented to the IPU membership during the 121st Assembly.



All of these handbooks are presented in parliament, often translated into national languages (the handbook on statelessness has just been translated into Turkish and Japanese) and frequently accompanied by national and regional training seminars. In 2009 the IPU helped set up a regional seminar for European parliaments on the basis of Handbook 15 - Disabilities: From Exclusion to Equality. The handbook was produced in cooperation with the United Nations and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The seminar was hosted by the UK Parliament and, like the handbook, aimed at raising awareness of the newly adopted United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Regardless of a country's human rights or economic situation, persons with disabilities are generally the last in line to have their human rights respected. The Convention and the handbook seek to change this situation for the 650 million people living with disabilities today.

Finally, the IPU also offers capacity-building for parliaments on the subject of the international human rights machinery. In 2009, the IPU organized a briefing session for members of parliament attending the 121st Assembly on the functioning of the new Universal Periodic Review mechanism set up by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The briefing elicited a great deal of interest. It provided examples of how parliaments can be party to this important exercise by ensuring that the national report is reviewed and debated in parliament, that parliament is represented when the report is debated by the members of the Human Rights Council, and that parliament is informed and can discuss action it may want to take to follow up the views and recommendations issued by the Council.

A similar one-day seminar took place immediately after the 121st Assembly. It brought together members of parliament and human rights experts for a discussion of the workings of the international human rights machinery. Again the participants focussed on ways in which parliament can be party to the processes as part of their normal oversight function.



Earlier in the year, the IPU organized a regional seminar for French-speaking African Parliaments on human rights treaty bodies. The seminar was hosted by the Parliament of Gabon. It was the culmination of a two year exercise carried out by the IPU in cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and with support from the United Nations Democracy Fund. The programme of activities served to raise awareness of existing human rights norms and treaty bodies and to identify how best each parliament in the region could make use of these instruments and bodies to advance its own human rights agenda.

The IPU continues to pay close attention to legislative actions to improve the welfare of children. At a seminar hosted by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica and organized by the IPU and UNICEF, parliamentarians from Latin American countries discussed ways to curb violence against children. Recommendations were adopted for parliaments to adopt preventive and criminalizing legislation, earmark budget allocations, and forge partnerships with civil society, international organizations and private-sector stakeholders.

The Addis Ababa Assembly provided additional focus on the rights of adolescent girls. An IPU-UNICEF panel discussion discussed ways to improve the life of adolescent girls: investing more in their education, promoting an end to violence against them, and building partnerships with the private sector and government to give girls opportunities to make a successful transition from school to work. Meanwhile, field visits were held for the MPs in Ethiopia to projects in Addis Ababa for vulnerable children and adolescents, again organized by the IPU and UNICEF (see photo left).



Development

Parliament is the guardian of the nation's development. It participates in debate on the country's development priorities, oversees the execution of development policies by the executive, represents the constituents' interests, and strives to ensure that development is sustainable.

Those tasks were given added focus when the Heads of State and Government met in 2000 to adopt the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Taken together, the eight goals aim to end extreme poverty by 2015. Individually, they concern ending hunger, and promoting universal education, gender equity, child health, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, environmental sustainability and global partnerships. Much of the IPU's development work in recent years has consisted of assisting parliaments in ensuring that the MDGs are met.

Part of that work has to do with the last of the goals, ensuring global partnerships. The IPU helps to build capacity in parliaments to oversee inflows of foreign aid and to monitor the proper and effective use of the funds. Inevitably, this became a subject of close interest during the two field trips by the UN Affairs Committee Advisory Group to Tanzania and Viet Nam, described elsewhere in this report, and the resolution adopted in Cape Town in 2008 on "Parliamentary oversight of State policies on foreign aid" retained all its urgency.

The IPU worked with the UN Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) in its efforts to improve the effectiveness of development cooperation, and with the OECD-led Working Party on Aid Effectiveness that monitors progress towards achieving the objectives of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action. The IPU co-chairs a working group on promoting domestic accountability towards greater aid effectiveness.

The IPU has also begun supporting a new project in the Asia-Pacific region, the facility for Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness (CDDE). Headed by UNDP, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank Institute, and the OECD, the CDDE aims to develop capacities for aid effectiveness by bringing together MPs, civil society representatives, donors and government ministries.

Trade and development

As part of MDG 8, the international community is committed to developing an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. The commitment includes an agreement to ensure tariff- and quota-free access for the exports of least developed countries.

The IPU accompanies this process. Together with the European Parliament, it has created a Parliamentary Conference on the World Trade Organization (WTO), which provides a parliamentary dimension to its work. In 2009, the IPU held a meeting on the dangers of increased trade protectionism at a time of global economic crisis at the annual WTO Public Forum.

The IPU also hosted two sessions of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO, the latter in conjunction with the 7th WTO Ministerial Conference, and open to all MPs present in Geneva at the time of the Ministerial Conference. The focus of the debate was the need for a more trenchant parliamentary contribution to the revitalization of multilateral trade talks. Parliamentarians see saving the Doha Round as one of the top priorities of the moment.

The Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action (BPOA) for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) will be convening a fourth UN LDC Conference in 2011 (LDC IV). Since October, the IPU has been actively encouraging further parliamentary involvement in the BPOA and in LDC IV preparations.

The IPU undertook case studies during the year, again to review the level of parliamentary involvement in planning and assessing national development plans and programmes. These were done in Tanzania and Zambia. The aim of the IPU studies was to give parliaments a better feel of how to assume ownership of development plans and their implementation, and ensure greater effectiveness of development aid. Both studies paid particular attention to parliamentary involvement in relation to child and maternal health issues which are integral to MDGs 4 and 5.

At the IPU Assembly in Addis Ababa, a panel debate was held to discuss parliamentary action to achieve MDGs 4 and 5 on child survival and maternal health. The discussion aimed to follow up on the first IPU-*Countdown to 2015* event, held in Cape Town the previous year. The *Countdown to 2015 Initiative* was a multi-partner project which tracked coverage levels of health interventions proven to reduce maternal, newborn and child mortality, identified knowledge gaps and proposed new actions to achieve MDGs 4 and 5. The debate was chaired by the Speaker of Ethiopia's House of Peoples' Representatives.

Child survival is directly linked to maternal health. Every year, more than half a million women die due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. And every year, 600,000 newborn infants are infected with HIV, mainly through mother-to-child-transmission. In line with their efforts to mobilize parliamentarians on this issue, the IPU and the World Health Organization jointly organized a third conference on maternal health and child survival on the role of parliaments in providing access to health for all women and children. The Conference, held in Kampala, reaffirmed the parliamentarians' commitment to ensuring access to health services for women and newborn children by focusing on financing, legislation and policy, oversight, human resources, service delivery, and women's empowerment.



HIV/AIDS

Mobilizing parliaments in combating HIV/AIDS is high on the political agenda of the IPU. It has set up an Advisory Group made up of members of parliament who are experts on the subject and have worked extensively in parliament on public health issues. The Group undertook several activities in 2009.

The year began with a seminar in Cape Town for the parliaments of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community (EAC), giving members of parliament from the two regions a chance to debate their role in improving access to HIV treatment. After the seminar, the Group remained in South Africa for a hearing inside the Parliament with different groups represented in the South African National AIDS Council, followed by meetings with health officials in the provinces of Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng, and visits to hospitals, clinics, and orphanages.

The second Advisory Group event took place at the end of the year. A two-day Viet Nam field visit included meetings with the National Assembly's Social Affairs Committee, the Deputy Minister of Health, and visits to hospitals, community centres and methadone substitution facilities. A regional training seminar for the parliaments of the IPU Asia-Pacific Group was subsequently hosted by the National Assembly to discuss HIV in terms of ethical norms and human rights standards. The MPs talked about HIV prevalence among populations at higher risk from HIV, including sex workers and intravenous drug users. The parliamentarians also heard presentations on trade rules and intellectual property laws and their effects on drug prices, which triggered a lively discussion about the impediments to wider access to anti-retroviral treatment, a topic previously taken up at a panel discussion at the 121st IPU Assembly.

The IPU, which works closely with UNAIDS, also participated in the work of the International Task Team on HIV-related travel restrictions and continues to lobby parliaments on the issue. The Governing Council endorsed a set of recommendations developed by the International Task Team. The recommendations, directed at governments, international and intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society, call for the elimination of HIV-related restrictions on entry, stay and residence.



The stigma that we all think we have addressed is still out there. We always try to hide it, and talk about pneumonia, talk about whatever. But denying the fact that this is alive and with us, we are saying to people, 'you may continue not looking after your health.' Let us not be shy about it. It is not a sin.

Former South Africa National Assembly Speaker Gwen Mahlangu-Nkabinde.



Gender equality and women's rights

Ensuring gender equality is central to achieving all the Millennium Development Goals. It is also a goal in its own right. For the IPU, which holds the fundamental policy position that there can be no democracy without the full and equal participation of women in political life, gender equality is a natural objective.

The IPU convenes an annual meeting of members of parliament during the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. In 2009, the meeting brought together some 140 MPs to review the *Role of parliaments in promoting equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women*. The meeting paid particular attention to the links between sharing of care responsibilities and women's participation in politics, as managing public and private responsibilities is one of the biggest obstacles to women joining politics. On March 5, the IPU presented its annual analysis of progress and setbacks of women in politics. The following day, the IPU and UNIFEM held a side event on *Gender equality and political accountability*, where the findings of IPU's survey on Equality in Politics were showcased.

The IPU also conducts major research and the organization contributes to the UN Millennium Development Goals Report and the UNDP Human Development Report by providing data on the number of women in parliament. The IPU has continued to collaborate in the International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics (www.iKNOWPolitics.org) along with its partners, the UNDP, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).

At the regional and country level, the IPU concentrated its efforts in 2009 on the Arab world and the Pacific region; two major regions where the representation of women continues to be very weak.

As part of a wider focus on women MPs in the Gulf Cooperation Council States, the IPU and the Parliament of Bahrain brought together women MPs from the Gulf States. The election for the first time of four women to the Parliament of Kuwait was hailed as a big step forward. The MPs, along with ministers, parliamentary advisers and heads of national women's councils took a close look at national plans that are meant to give practical effect to constitutional principles to promote the advancement of women. They considered what could be done in parliament to accelerate the implementation of the plans, by - for example - repealing discriminatory laws and questioning the government on the way the strategies are put into practice and funded. The conference also started to lay the basis for a wider programme of support to women parliamentarians of the GCC states.

In Jordan, the IPU helped set up a national seminar aimed at identifying discriminatory legislation, an event that contributed to a broader revision of the country's criminal code. The meeting, held jointly with the House of Representatives and UNDP, looked in particular at discriminatory provisions in Jordan's labour law, the law on social security, and the electoral law. Other meetings also served to consolidate the links between women parliamentarians, ministers and representatives of civil society. During the year, training was also provided to Jordanian women MPs in how to put across political messages.

Work continued in the Pacific region where the public debate continues on the question of quotas for women in parliament. The IPU helped provide expertise for a meeting on the subject in the Cook Islands. During the IPU Assemblies, the Gender Partnership Group continued its work to bring discreet pressure to bear, holding hearings with the delegations of parliaments with few or no women members, including Palau.

Gender equality work in Africa

A two-year project in Burundi drew to a close in June. Its objective had been to support parliamentary action on questions related to women's rights and gender equality. Again, the Criminal Code was up for inspection, with amendments aiming at sanctioning different forms of violence against women. The women MPs succeeded in amending the Electoral Code to secure a minimum of 30 per cent of women in local councils. The project ended with the adoption of a plan of action to mainstream gender into the parliament's work. There was also training for women MPs in some of the skills needed in the job, such as public speaking in the chamber and dealing with the media.

In Togo, the parliament held a conference on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for West African Francophone parliaments which established a strategy for parliaments to incorporate the Convention in their work.

A meeting was held in Rwanda to take stock of CEDAW, and how far implementation of the Convention had gone in the country. In the only country in the world where women are a majority in parliament (56%), the outlook is good, yet challenges persist. Women need to become cognisant of their rights, and the understanding of such rights among the general public needs to be improved. For parliament, the meeting recommended the use of sex-disaggregated data and the elimination of discriminatory provisions from the criminal, labour and commercial codes.

On the question of CEDAW itself, collaboration with the United Nations Committee on CEDAW has gone from strength to strength. The IPU keeps watch over the involvement of parliaments in the reporting exercise and in the implementation of the recommendations made by the UN Committee.

It also pays very close attention to the involvement of women. Delegates attending the UN Committee are now systematically asked if the State Party's report has been submitted to parliament. At the end of the October Assembly in Geneva, the IPU and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights used the occasion of the seventh annual parliamentary seminar on women's rights to celebrate 30 years of CEDAW and its Optional Protocol.

Parliaments will not be able to tackle gender issues if they are not equipped with the structures to do so. In recognition of this, the IPU holds an annual meeting of parliamentary committees that cover gender issues, and September's event was organized under the theme *Is parliament open to women?* The meeting supported IPU's latest research project on Gender-Sensitive Parliaments.

Coinciding with the 15th anniversary of the UN Beijing Conference, the meeting took stock of progress over the past decade and a half, concluding that while there were episodes to be celebrated (as evidenced, for example, by the contribution of the Kuwaiti MPs to the IPU event) the overall pace of progress was frustratingly slow.

The photo shows Ms. Pascale Bruderer, Speaker of the National Council of Switzerland, host to the 2010 Meeting of Women Speakers.



The Fifth Annual Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament was hosted in Vienna by the Speaker of the Austrian National Council. The meeting addressed challenges encountered in achieving MDG 3 to promote gender equality, in particular violence against women and the financial crisis. Women Speakers and Deputy Speakers of 15 national parliaments debated the financial crisis and how it increased women's vulnerability to violence. Women who were economically independent were in a safer position than the many millions who were not, but the road to achieving such independence was often pitted with violence. The consequences of such violence, they said, hampered development, imperilled poverty reduction and impaired women's contribution to development, democracy, peace and security. The women Speakers also signed up to UNIFEM's campaign to *Say NO to Violence against Women*.

Violence against Women

In 2008, the IPU decided to join the UN Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women (VAW). Shortly thereafter, an IPU conference in Geneva identified six VAW priority actions for parliaments.

The IPU launched a parliamentary campaign to end violence against women. It created a section on its website on the campaign (<http://www.ipu.org/vaw>), produced a publication on parliament's role in ending violence against women and campaign material to support parliaments in marking the 10th anniversary of the formal proclamation of 25 November as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. About 30 parliaments reported to the IPU on activities they had conducted on the Day.

The IPU also started a series of regional parliamentary meetings to mobilize parliaments in support of action. A first meeting took place in Paris on Migration and Violence against Women, looking at how migration makes women more exposed to violence, from traffickers, in detention centres and in the receiving countries. Measures were proposed to facilitate access to justice and support for women victims, regardless of nationality or legal status. The meeting was held for European parliaments in collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and with the support of the French Parliament.

The IPU also pursued its work on female genital mutilation (FGM). A panel event was organized with the International Organisation for Migration and other bodies on 6 February, the Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM. The meeting concluded that only firm political will would put an end to FGM, a practice experienced by more than 100 million women in the world. A joint publication was issued to mark the occasion.



Despite being considered as a major obstacle to development, violence against women has not been made a priority of our governments. This apathy is the outcome of the general indifference of our respective societies, because regardless of our cultural differences, violence against women in all societies has by and large been perceived as "a private affair".

Dr. Fahmida Mirza, Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan



-GENERAL

IPU PRESIDENT

The IPU and the United Nations

A Growing Relationship

The IPU and the United Nations are widely differing organizations. Next to the United Nations with its multitudes of departments, programmes, specialized agencies, financial and human resources and a presence in virtually every country and territory in the world, the IPU cuts a more diminutive figure.

Yet, there are significant similarities between the two organizations. Much like the United Nations, the IPU is a global political forum; it works for international cooperation among parliaments. The IPU is also an operational body that implements programmes.

In both of these roles, the IPU mobilizes parliaments in support of international negotiations at the United Nations, and assists them in implementing multilateral agreements and in holding governments to account in the process. The IPU supports the UN system in its relationship with parliaments and helps build public support through parliaments for action by the United Nations. The IPU conveys the views and suggestions of parliaments to the United Nations and it provides the beginnings of parliamentary oversight and accountability to the world organization.

In short, the IPU provides a parliamentary dimension to the work of the United Nations. The IPU is and remains independent of and distinct from the United Nations. It can best be described as the parliamentary counterpart of the United Nations at the global level.

You are change agents, well placed to build bridges between the local and the global. For these reasons and more, the United Nations attaches great importance to the parliamentary voice in world affairs and to the partnership between the world Organization and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, message to 120th IPU Assembly

2009 offered many examples of a growing relationship between the two organizations. As this report testifies, there is a United Nations angle to almost every activity in which the IPU was involved during the year.

Throughout 2009, the IPU brought a parliamentary voice and representation to the deliberations in the United Nations General Assembly, its many subsidiary bodies and major United Nations conferences. The organization developed a closer working relationship with the Development Cooperation Forum, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. Step by patient step, the IPU demonstrated through concrete action the benefits that both the United Nations and the IPU derive from a closer working relationship with a more active cooperation and coordination.

Building strong parliamentary institutions, improving accountability and parliamentary oversight, nurturing political reconciliation, promoting gender equality, defending human rights, advancing essential development goals, organizing parliamentary involvement in global negotiating processes: the list is long. Everywhere the IPU went in 2009 - from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe via Cambodia, Kenya, or the Maldives - it promoted and facilitated parliamentary interaction with the United Nations system.

The joint UN-IPU Parliamentary Hearing is emblematic of a stronger relationship between the two organizations. It offers an opportunity for an ever growing parliamentary audience to learn more of the workings of the United Nations and discuss its response to major issues facing humanity. The 2009 hearing focused on building political support for and implementing effective responses to the global economic crisis.

But the Hearing also offers an opportunity to exercise the beginnings of parliamentary oversight at the United Nations. The members of parliament who attend the meeting also contribute through suggestions for improving the international community's response to global issues. The 2009 hearing gave rise to many proposals, particularly with regard to solutions for a more sustainable economy and how to build better transparency and accountability into financial and banking systems.

The IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs met in the course of the year and recommended a number of steps to strengthen the relationship. It held hearings with senior United Nations officials on food security, climate change, development cooperation and UN reform.

The Committee also discussed the report of its Advisory Group following its mission to Viet Nam to examine progress in implementing One UN reform and endorsed its conclusions. The Committee called on all parliaments to assume a more dynamic role in the design, implementation and oversight of national development plans, as well as in the upstream planning of the national budget. The need for a more coherent approach to aid delivery at the national level was once again underscored, which in turn should lead to greater effectiveness, transparency and accountability of UN operations.



IPU survey on parliamentary interaction with the United Nations

In 2009, the IPU released the preliminary findings of a survey it had carried out on how parliaments organize their work vis-à-vis the United Nations. The report, based on information from some 70 countries indicated that there was significant scope for improving the relationship between national parliaments and the United Nations. The findings included the following:

By and large, issues relating to the United Nations are mainly dealt with directly in the plenary or in parliamentary committees on foreign relations/international affairs. Instructions or national mandates given to the ambassador at the UN are only occasionally discussed in parliament. A vast majority of parliaments report that instructions on UN matters rarely require their approval.

Over 70 per cent of respondents state that MPs are included in national delegations to the UN General Assembly. However, only 30 per cent do so always or often. In most countries, this practice tends to be ad hoc and sporadic.

There is little evidence of systematic parliamentary involvement in the preparation and follow-up to special meetings of the United Nations and, in fact, most parliaments do not regularly monitor major international negotiating processes taking place at the United Nations.

Few parliaments have regular and systematic interaction with UN country offices. When it does take place it is generally ad-hoc, or occurs on the occasion of special anniversaries (International Days, the launching of UN and country reports and publications, etc). In many instances, it is the United Nations that initiates cooperation or joint activities in parliaments. Many parliaments report on activities – including technical assistance - initiated by UNDP and other UN bodies such as UNAIDS, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA, WB and the WHO.

Many parliaments receive training and technical assistance from the United Nations in areas such as bill drafting, procurement, human resources and the improvement of facilities. This support is driven by supply rather than demand. There is generally a lack of strategic planning and engagement by parliaments in setting priorities and developing assistance projects.

The survey reveals several challenges and barriers to parliaments wishing to develop closer interaction with the United Nations. Many parliaments are still at an early stage of institutional development. They do not have the knowledge or professional and financial resources they need to be able to deal with the enormous diversity and depth of issues on the UN agenda and the huge volume of documentation and information that needs to be absorbed. Language is also a barrier. Time is another significant constraint.

Nevertheless, the respondents indicated a strong interest in building capacity to be more involved in UN processes and made many suggestions for support they would like to receive from the IPU.



Parliaments and the information age

Modern information and communication technology (ICT) is essential to democracy and development. It can help parliaments become more transparent, accessible, accountable and effective. It can also go a long way to facilitating people's participation in politics. This is particularly true for young people, in whose lives information technology has a pervasive influence in a way that formal politics does not.

ICT is an important tool. It is also fast becoming a way of life. An information society has appeared in which data transfer and communications take fractions of seconds, developments anywhere in the world can be captured instantly everywhere else, the power to keep track of people and goods is greater than ever before, and the potential for abuse outstrips anything seen in the past.

The IPU has teamed up with the United Nations and created a Centre for ICT in Parliament to address these two issues. The Centre promotes more and better use of ICT in parliament and suggests what can be done to build a functioning and responsible information society.

Each year the Centre organizes an e-parliament conference. In 2009 it was hosted by the United States Congress in Washington, D.C. and brought together over 450 members and senior staff from parliament along with experts to discuss the latest developments in ICT. The debates focused on how ICT can help connect parliaments with citizens and strengthen parliaments in emerging democracies.

Strategic planning, management and oversight, parliamentary websites, new media, management of legislative documents, open standards, implementing Extensible Marking Language (XML) in parliament, infrastructure and security, recording and reporting floor and committee proceedings, enhancing library services: this was a complex and multifaceted agenda that brought extraordinary insights into the potential of ICT for enhancing democracy through better and more effective parliaments.

In the history of American democracy, there was a time when a message could travel only as fast as a horse could gallop or a ship could sail. Today, a message from the American people to their representatives in Congress travels as fast as a citizen can twitter, blog, or post to Facebook. Leading the way in this regard are the young people of the world.

Ms. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives at the opening ceremony of the e-Parliament Conference (see photo)



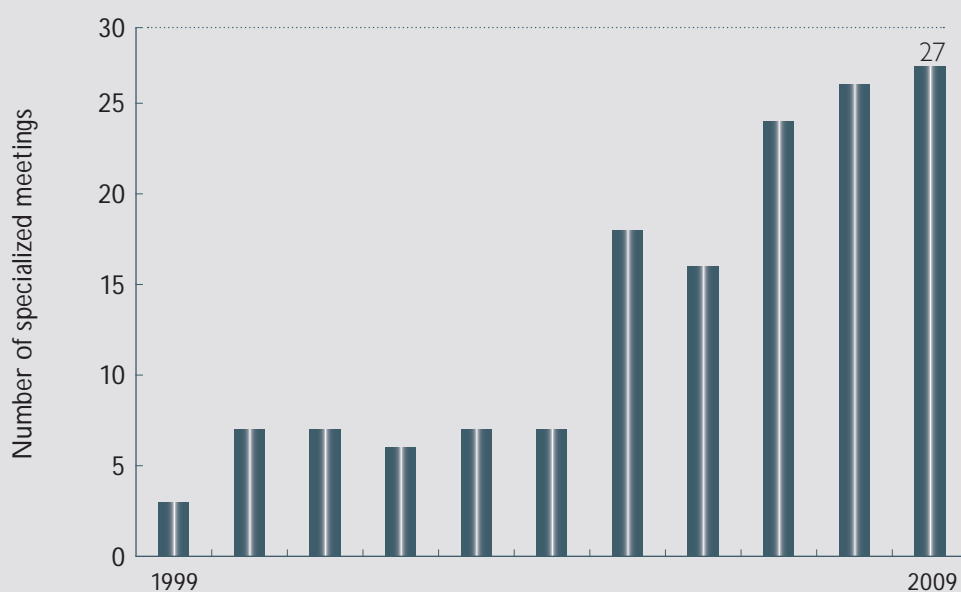
The IPU faces its own challenges in relation to ICT. Its bilingual website <http://www.ipu.org> remains the best channel for information produced by the organization. It receives tens of thousands of hits every day, with a monthly total of over 1,5 million hits. The aggregate number of hits in 2009 grew by another 5 per cent over the previous year and is now close to 15 million per annum. New sections and pages are constantly added to the website, covering every aspect of the IPU's work.

During the year, many publications were sent to parliaments, universities, libraries, non-governmental organizations and the public at large. *The World of Parliaments* maintained its quarterly issues, while the e-bulletin subscriber list grew by a vigorous 30 per cent in 2009.



Institutional developments

TEN-YEAR EVOLUTION IN IPU ACTIVITIES



Specialised meetings in 2009

- ➔ **Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15)**
COPENHAGEN, 16 December 2009
- ➔ **Regional Seminar on HIV/AIDS**
HANOI (Viet Nam), 10-12 December 2009
- ➔ **Regional conference for the Twelve Plus on Migration and Violence Against Women**
PARIS (France), 10-11 December 2009
- ➔ **Conference of Women Parliamentarians and Women in Decision-making Positions in the GCC States**
MANAMA (Bahrain), 9-10 December 2009
- ➔ **Regional Seminar on the contribution of parliaments to long-term peace in the extended Great Lakes region**
NAIROBI (Kenya), 7-9 December 2009
- ➔ **Enlarged session of the Steering Committee of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO (held on the occasion of the seventh WTO Ministerial Conference)**
GENEVA (IPU Headquarters), 1 December 2009

- ➡ **Conference on “Ensuring Access to Health for All Women and Newborn - The Role of Parliaments”**
KAMPALA (Uganda), 23-25 November 2009
- ➡ **Joint UN-IPU Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations**
NEW YORK (UN Headquarters), 19-20 November 2009
- ➡ **Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the World Summit on Food Security**
ROME (Italy), 13 November 2009
- ➡ **World e-Parliament Conference 2009**
WASHINGTON D.C.(USA), 3-5 November 2009
- ➡ **Regional Conference and iKNOW Politics Arabic site launch “The role of Media and Information Technology in increasing the number and effectiveness of women in Politics”**
AMMAN (Jordan), 27-28 October 2009
- ➡ **Seminar on “Implementing the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: What part for parliaments?”**
GENEVA (CICG), 22 October 2009
- ➡ **Seventh Information Seminar on Parliaments and the CEDAW**
GENEVA (CICG), 22 October 2009
- ➡ **Conference “Evaluating parliament: objectives, methods, results and impact”, organized jointly by the IPU and ASGP**
GENEVA (CICG), 22 October 2009
- ➡ **Parliamentary Panel within the framework of the Annual WTO Public Forum**
GENEVA, 30 September 2009
- ➡ **Fourth Conference for Members of Parliamentary Committees on the Status of Women and other Committees Dealing with Gender Equality “Is Parliament Open to Women ? An Appraisal”**
GENEVA, 28-29 September 2009
- ➡ **Briefing for members of parliament attending the opening of the 64th session of the United Nations General Assembly**
New York (UN Headquarters), 24 September 2009
- ➡ **Parliamentary Conference on Democracy in Africa**
GABORONE (Botswana), 14-16 September 2009
- ➡ **Regional Seminar for Latin America countries on “The Role of Parliaments in Confronting Violence against Children”**
SAN JOSE (Costa Rica), 26-28 August 2009
- ➡ **Fifth Meeting of Women Speakers of Parliament**
VIENNA (Austria), 13-14 July 2009
- ➡ **Parliamentary Conference on the global economic crisis**
GENEVA (UN Office), 7-8 May 2009
- ➡ **Regional meeting for Twelve Plus parliaments on the rights of persons with disabilities**
LONDON (United Kingdom), 27-28 April 2009
- ➡ **Regional seminar on the role of parliaments in promoting peaceful and sustainable societies in South-East Asia**
PHNOM PENH (Cambodia), 9-11 March 2009
- ➡ **Regional seminar for members and staff of French-speaking African parliaments on human rights treaty bodies**
LIBREVILLE (Gabon), 4-6 March 2009
- ➡ **Parliamentary meeting on the occasion of the 53rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**
NEW YORK, 4 March 2009
- ➡ **Subregional Seminar for West African francophone parliaments on women’s rights**
LOME (Togo), 16-18 February 2009
- ➡ **Regional training seminar on HIV/AIDS for the parliaments the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community**
CAPE TOWN (South Africa), 20-21 January 2009

Resource mobilization

The IPU is funded by its members and associate members through annual assessed contributions and through voluntary funds provided by external donors. The IPU is not dependent on voluntary funds to cover its basic operational needs. However, to realize its full potential and meet increasing demands for assistance, additional funds are required. The expanded agenda, which includes programmes to promote democracy, development and peace, requires more funding that is both predictable and flexible.

The IPU's programmes and the requirements to carry them out are presented in a document entitled "Promotion of Democracy, Development and Peace, activities and requirements 2010-2012". The plan is revised annually and provides the basis for discussions with donors about support.

As a result of efforts to obtain predictable and stable funding from voluntary sources, the IPU has established multi-year partnerships with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Irish Aid and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), which have all committed programme funds amounting to some CHF 4.5 million for 2008-2010. Other government donors, the UNDP, the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), the European Commission and the Government of Finland contribute to specific projects. Projects to strengthen national parliaments are often carried out in cooperation with UNDP.

The IPU at a glance

Current composition of the Executive Committee (31 March 2010)

	Members	Expiry of term
<i>Ex-officio President</i>	Mr. Th.-B. Gurirab (Namibia)	October 2011
<i>IPU Vice-Presidents</i>	Mr. R.M.K. Al Shariqi (United Arab Emirates)	October 2012
	Mr. A. Alonso Díaz-Caneja (Mexico)	October 2012
	Mr. M.C. Nago (Benin)	October 2011
	Mr. M. Vardanyan (Armenia)	October 2013
	Mr. G. Versnick (Belgium)	October 2010
	Mr. Young Chin (Republic of Korea)	October 2011
<i>Members</i>	Ms. P. Cayetano (Philippines)	April 2010
	Mr. J.A. Coloma (Chile)	October 2011
	Ms. Z. Drif Bitat (Algeria)	October 2011
	Ms. J. Fotso (Cameroon)	October 2010
	Mr. Ngo Quang Xuan (Viet Nam)	October 2011
	Mr. Nhem Thavy (Cambodia)	October 2013
	Mr. K. Örnfjäder (Sweden)	October 2013
	Mr. R. del Picchia (France)	October 2011
	Ms. D. Stump (Switzerland)	October 2013
Mr. T. Toga (Ethiopia)	October 2011	

Standing Committees: composition of the bureaux PEACE AND INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

<i>President</i>	Mr. T. Boa (Côte d'Ivoire)	<i>African Group</i>
<i>First Vice-President</i>	Mr. E. Zialcita (Philippines)	<i>Asia-Pacific Group</i>
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>	TITULAR	SUBSTITUTE
African Group	Current President	Mr. Z. Madasa (South Africa)
Arab Group	Mr. B. Boutouiga (Algeria)	Vacancy
Asia-Pacific Group	Current First Vice-President	Mr. J.D. Seelam (India)
Eurasia Group	Mr. V. Likhachev (Russian Federation)	Mr. V. Popov (Belarus)
Latin American Group	Mr. A. Gutiérrez Cueva (Peru)	Mr. A. Santos (Brazil)
Twelve Plus Group	Mr. A. Destexhe (Belgium)	Mr. J. Pflug (Germany)
<i>Rapporteurs of the Standing Committee to the 122nd Assembly</i>		
	Ms. M.T. Ortuño (Mexico)	
	Mr. Apiwan Wiriyachai (Thailand)	

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, FINANCE AND TRADE

<i>President</i>	Mr. P. Martin-Lalande (France)	<i>Twelve Plus Group</i>
<i>First Vice-President</i>	Mr. S. Al Hossaini (Saudi Arabia)	<i>Arab Group</i>
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>	TITULAR	SUBSTITUTE
African Group	Vacancy	Mr. K. Mporogomyi (United Republic of Tanzania)
Arab Group	Current First Vice-President	Mr. M. El Said (Egypt)
Asia-Pacific Group	Ms. S. Tioulong (Cambodia)	Ms. D. Vale (Australia)
Eurasia Group	Vacancy	Mr. B.Z. Zhambalnimbuev (Russian Federation)
Latin American Group	Mr. A. Lins (Brazil)	Mr. R. Machuca (El Salvador)
Twelve Plus Group	Current President	Mr. F. Notari (Monaco)
<i>Rapporteurs of the Standing Committee to the 122nd Assembly</i>		
	Mr. F.-X. de Donnea (Belgium)	
	Mr. G. Lubinda (Zambia)	

DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

<i>President</i>	Vacancy	<i>Latin American Group</i>
<i>First Vice-President</i>	Mr. Y. Zhumabayev (Kazakhstan)	<i>Eurasia Group</i>
<i>Vice-Presidents</i>	TITULAR	SUBSTITUTE
African Group	Mr. A.K. Bagbin (Ghana)	Vacancy
Arab Group	Mr. Z. Azmy (Egypt)	Mr. J. Fairouz (Bahrain)
Asia-Pacific Group	Vacancy	Mr. T.J. Wan Junaidi (Malaysia)
Eurasia Group	Current First Vice-President	Mr. A. Felaliev (Tajikistan)
Latin American Group	Current President	Mr. D. Cortez (Panama)
Twelve Plus Group	Ms. R.M. Albernaz (Portugal)	Mr. J. Winkler (Germany)
<i>Rapporteurs of the Standing Committee to the 122nd Assembly</i>		
	Ms. M. Lugarić (Croatia)	
	Mr. A.K. Bagbin (Ghana)	

Membership

In 2009, the Governing Council approved a request for reaffiliation from the Parliament of Bangladesh, and suspended the parliaments of Guinea, Madagascar and Niger on the grounds that their dissolution had been unconstitutional. The Council also decided that the membership of Somalia would be automatically suspended effective 1 January 2010, for the accumulation of arrears in contributions. The IPU currently comprises 151 Member Parliaments.

Members (151)

Afghanistan, **A**lbania, **A**lgeria, **A**ndorra, **A**ngola, **A**rgentina, **A**rmenia, **A**ustralia, **A**ustria, **A**zerbaijan, **B**ahrain, **B**angladesh, **B**elarus, **B**elgium, **B**enin, **B**olivia, **B**osnia and Herzegovina, **B**otswana, **B**razil, **B**ulgaria, **B**urkina Faso, **B**urundi, **C**ambodia, **C**ameroon, **C**anada, **C**ape Verde, **C**hile, **C**hina, **C**olombia, **C**omoros, **C**ongo, **C**osta Rica, **C**ôte d'Ivoire, **C**roatia, **C**uba, **C**yprus, **C**zech Republic, **D**emocratic Republic of the Congo, **D**emocratic People's Republic of Korea, **D**enmark, **D**ominican Republic, **E**cuator, **E**gypt, **E**l Salvador, **E**stonia, **E**thiopia, **F**inland, **F**rance, **G**abon, **G**ambia, **G**eorgia, **G**ermany, **G**hana, **G**reece, **G**uatemala, **H**ungary, **I**celand, **I**ndia, **I**ndonesia, **I**ran (Islamic Republic of), **I**raq, **I**reland, **I**srael, **I**taly, **J**apan, **J**ordan, **K**azakhstan, **K**enya, **K**uwait, **K**yrgyzstan, **L**ao People's Democratic Republic, **L**atvia, **L**ebanon, **L**esotho, **L**iberia, **L**ibyan Arab Jamahiriya, **L**iechtenstein, **L**ithuania, **L**uxembourg, **M**alaysia, **M**aldives, **M**ali, **M**alta, **M**auritania, **M**auritius, **M**exico, **M**onaco, **M**ongolia, **M**ontenegro, **M**orocco, **M**ozambique, **N**amibia, **N**epal, **N**etherlands, **N**ew Zealand, **N**icaragua, **N**igeria, **N**orway, **O**man, **P**akistan, **P**alau, **P**alestine, **P**anama, **P**apua New Guinea, **P**araguay, **P**eru, **P**hilippines, **P**oland, **P**ortugal, **Q**atar, **R**epublic of Korea, **R**epublic of Moldova, **R**omania, **R**ussian Federation, **R**wanda, **S**amoa, **S**an Marino, **S**ao Tome and Principe, **S**audi Arabia, **S**enegal, **S**erbia, **S**ierra Leone, **S**ingapore, **S**lovakia, **S**lovenia, **S**outh Africa, **S**pain, **S**ri Lanka, **S**udan, **S**uriname, **S**weden, **S**witzerland, **S**yrian Arab Republic, **T**ajikistan, **T**hailand, **T**imor-Leste, **T**he former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, **T**ogo, **T**unisia, **T**urkey, **U**ganda, **U**kraïne, **U**nited Arab Emirates, **U**nited Kingdom, **U**nited Republic of Tanzania, **U**ruguay, **V**enezuela, **V**iet Nam, **Y**emen, **Z**ambia, **Z**imbabwe.

Associate Members (8)

Andean Parliament, Central American Parliament, East African Legislative Assembly, European Parliament, Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, Latin American Parliament, Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP)

The ASGP is a consultative body of the IPU comprised of senior parliamentary officials who are in charge of parliamentary services. The Association and the IPU Secretariat endeavour to develop synergies to advance their respective agendas. Since 2003, the President of the ASGP has reported annually to the IPU Executive Committee on the Association's activities.

The Association's purposes and activities include the study of the law, practice and procedure of parliaments. It makes suggestions for cooperation between parliaments and for improving their working methods. The agenda for ASGP meetings includes discussion on current themes on the IPU agenda; past examples have included the role of parliaments in promoting reconciliation after civil strife, parliamentary ethics and the development of information and communication technologies in parliaments.

Another purpose is to ensure cooperation, when requested and in conjunction with the IPU, in providing legal and technical assistance to parliaments. Many of the programmes of assistance conducted by the IPU in 2009 were implemented with substantial support from the ASGP through its members, who provided the necessary expertise. Since 2006, the IPU and the ASGP have jointly organised a major conference in Geneva, following the October Assembly, on a topical issue related to the work of parliament. In October 2009, the conference was on methods for evaluating parliamentary performance.

The Association has an Executive Committee, whose members must belong to different parliaments. The President is Mr. Hafnaoui Amrani, Secretary General of the Council of the Nation of Algeria.

Financial results

Management's Responsibility for Financial Reporting

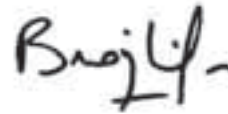
The management of the Inter-Parliamentary Union is responsible for the reliability, integrity and objectivity of the accompanying financial statements and annual financial report. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards. Where necessary, the statements include amounts that are based on judgments and estimates by management. To assist management in fulfilling its responsibilities, a system of internal accounting controls has been established to provide reasonable assurance that the financial statements are accurate and reliable and that assets are safeguarded.

The Governing Council is responsible for approving the Annual Financial Statements. The Governing Council has delegated certain responsibilities to the Internal Auditors, including the responsibility for reviewing the annual financial statements and meeting with management and the external auditor, as necessary, on matters relating to the financial reporting process.

These financial statements have been audited by the external auditor appointed by the Executive Committee.



Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General



Victoria Browning
Director of the Division
of Support Services

External Auditor's Opinion

In execution of the mandate granted to me, I have audited the accounts of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for the year ending 31 December 2009.

The book-keeping was duly made available to me at the Union's Headquarters. The audit consisted of verifying the income and expenditure operations of the financial year and the content of the balance sheet. My examination included a general review of the accounting records by spot checks and other supporting evidence as I considered necessary in the circumstances. Furthermore, the audit consisted of checking administrative practices and procedures where they could have economic implications.

I certify that the accounts and financial statements present fairly the financial operations of the Organization during 2009 and its financial situation at the end of 2009.



Lars Christian Møller
Deputy Director General
Riksrevisjonen, Norway

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Statement of Financial Position at 31 December 2009 In CHF (Swiss francs)

	2009	2008
ASSETS		
Cash on Hand	12,740	25,646
Cash on Deposit	7,127,099	2,758,255
Term Deposits	48,405	5,488,851
Investments	<u>2,519,954</u>	<u>1,384,071</u>
	9,708,198	9,656,823
Accounts Receivable		
from Members (Notes 3 & 4)	946,593	769,629
from Staff	24,202	31,673
from Donors (Note 5)	10,204	27,833
from Tax Reimbursements	45,993	69,457
Others (Note 3(b))	<u>124,917</u>	<u>168,070</u>
	1,151,909	1,066,662
Prepaid Expenses (Note 6)	113,479	72,851
Inventories of Official Gifts	12,811	15,056
Fixed Assets (Note 7)		
Building and Grounds	9,365,782	9,356,495
Furnishings	778,203	774,704
IT Equipment	319,811	276,152
Vehicles	78,534	78,534
less Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(2,314,826)</u>	<u>(2,001,106)</u>
	8,227,504	8,484,779
Total Assets	19,213,901	19,296,171
LIABILITIES AND RESERVES		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Payables	474,929	576,172
Advances from Donors (Note 5)	1,382,865	1,287,629
Advances from Members	<u>231,092</u>	<u>786,255</u>
	2,088,886	2,650,056
Loans (Note 9)		
Current Portion	189,600	189,600
Long Term	7,963,200	8,152,800
Pension Fund Liability (Note 10(a))	2,044,000	1,386,000
Deferred Liabilities (Note 10(b))	1,823,693	1,691,570
Total Liabilities	14,109,379	14,070,026
Restricted Funds (Note 12)	167,832	143,894
Working Capital Fund (after contribution)	4,936,690	5,082,251
Total Liabilities and Reserves	19,213,901	19,296,171

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Statement of Financial Performance

for the year ended 31 December 2009 In CHF (Swiss francs)

	2009	2008
Operating Income		
1 Assessed Contributions	11,856,735	11,507,755
2 Staff Assessment (Notes 2(f), 14)	1,222,306	1,176,484
3 Voluntary Contributions (Notes 5, 15)	2,017,767	1,852,342
4 Investment income (Note 8)	149,926	75,237
5 Other Income (Note 16)	14,806	39,417
Total Operating Income	15,261,540	14,651,235
Operating Expenses		
1 Executive Office	1,401,986	1,220,807
2 Assembly Affairs and Relations with Member Parliaments	2,836,496	2,784,456
3 Promotion of Democracy	3,936,033	3,487,751
4 External Relations	2,150,124	2,314,828
5 Project Direct Costs (Notes 5, 15)	1,878,778	1,736,991
6 Support Services	2,385,124	2,371,870
7 Allowance for Doubtful Accounts	19,207	0
8 Grants	52,153	51,184
9 Reserves and Provisions (Notes 12)	89,200	101,200
Total Operating Expenses	14,749,101	14,069,087
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	512,439	582,148
Actuarial Gain/(Loss) on Pension Fund (Note 10 (a))	(658,000)	(1,296,000)
Net Movement in Working Capital	(145,561)	(713,852)
Working Capital Fund, Beginning of Year	5,082,251	5,796,103
Working Capital Fund, End of Year	4,936,690	5,082,251

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

Statement of Cash Flows

for the year ended 31 December 2009 In CHF (Swiss francs)

	2009	2008
Opening Cash Balance	9,656,823	8,005,166
Cash provided by (used in) Operations		
Operating Surplus	512,439	582,148
plus non-cash expenditures	469,780	538,107
Changes in Receivables	(85,247)	324,737
Changes in inventories and prepaid expenses	(38,382)	(6,413)
Changes in Payables	(561,571)	490,206
Total cash from operations	297,419	1,928,785
Cash used in Financing Activities		
Loan from (Repayment to) Swiss Federal Government	(189,600)	(189,600)
Change in Trust Fund Balance	0	0
Total cash from Financing	(189,600)	(189,600)
Cash used in Investing Activities		
Other Assets	(56,444)	(87,528)
Total cash used in investments	(56,444)	(87,528)
Closing Cash Balance	9,708,198	9,656,823

Notes to the Financial Statements

1. Nature of Organization

The Inter-Parliamentary Union is the international organization of the Parliaments of sovereign states and has a unique inter-state character. It is the focal point for world-wide parliamentary dialogue. Since 1889, the IPU has worked for peace and cooperation among peoples and for the firm establishment of representative institutions. The Union shares the objectives of, and works in close cooperation with, the United Nations where it is an official observer. It also cooperates with regional inter-parliamentary organizations, as well as with international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations which are motivated by the same ideals.

The IPU is an international parliamentary political organization and possesses international legal personality. The IPU is representative in character and organization, subject to the rule of law, and governed by its constitution. States and international organizations dealing with the IPU have recognized its standing, authority and capacity to act on the international plane, within the area of its functional responsibilities, as the international organization of parliaments.

Since 1 January 2005, the IPU is affiliated with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF).

The "Financial Regulations of the Inter-Parliamentary Union" is the overall governing instrument of the IPU's financial administration.

2. Accounting Policies and Basis of Presentation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of International Public Sector Accounting Standards applicable to a going-concern, which assume that the organization will continue in operation for the foreseeable future and will be able to realize its assets and discharge its liabilities during the normal course of its operations.

a) Revenue Recognition

Assessed contributions are recognized as revenue when they come due. Other revenues are recognized when services are performed or when products are shipped.

Voluntary contributions, interest earnings, and contributions from new or reaffiliated members are recognized as revenues.

b) Investments

Investments in mutual funds and bonds are reported at lesser of market value or book value.

c) Inventories

Stocks of publications for future distribution are written down to a net realizable value of nil in each reporting period. Official gifts are valued at cost.

d) Property, Plant, Equipment and Depreciation

The value of the Headquarters building and office equipment is recorded at cost, which includes interest costs and project management costs incurred during the construction or acquisition. Capital costs are reduced by the amounts of any capital grants received. The Union reviews the value of its property, plant and equipment at the end of each reporting period to determine whether carrying values are recoverable with any resulting write-downs charged as an expense.

Buildings and each class of equipment are depreciated on a straight-line basis over their useful estimated lives which are as follows:

Category	Useful Life
Buildings	50 years
Furnishings	10 years
Vehicles	5 years
IT hardware and software	4 years

e) Taxes

The IPU has been expressly recognized by the two countries in which it is physically located, Switzerland and the USA, as an international organization entitled to the appropriate privileges and immunities. It enjoys a special international organization tax-exempt status in both countries. In Switzerland, under the terms of a 1971 Accord, the IPU is exempt from direct and indirect federal, cantonal, and community taxes and is subject to the same duties as other international organizations. In the United States, the IPU is exempted from direct federal taxes and duties under the terms of the International Organizations Immunities Act and is exempted from the payment of New York State and local sales and use taxes.

Any recoverable taxes paid in either jurisdiction are recorded as Accounts Receivable.

f) Staff Assessment

Staff salaries are taxed internally for the benefit of all member parliaments. The gross amount of staff salaries is reported as an expense, while the internal staff assessment is reported as revenue. The amount of staff assessment is determined in accordance with the United Nations common system of salaries (as adjusted from time to time), allowances and benefits based upon the average tax rates of Geneva, London, Montreal, New York, Paris, Rome and Vienna.

g) Pension and Retirement Allowance Expenses

The IPU has a pension fund for staff members who retired before 2005, which is operated as a separate entity and which is governed by its own Pension Board. The IPU's representative on the Pension Board provides a report to the Executive Committee each year on the activities and status of the pension fund.

The net actuarial liability of the legacy staff pension fund is the difference between the estimated actuarial value of the fund and the estimated present value of the future pension payments. The actuarial value of the fund has been calculated as the three year moving average of the fair market value of the assets of the fund at year end.

Active employees participate in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF). The liability of the IPU in respect to the pensions of active employees is limited to the annual contributions and any deficiency payment determined by the Fund.

Other retirement allowances earned by employees are reported as expenses in the year they are earned (Note 10 (b)).

h) Foreign Currency Translations

The IPU uses Swiss francs as its functional currency. Revenue and expense items arising from transactions in US dollars are converted into Swiss francs at the UN exchange rate for the month. Transactions in euros are converted into Swiss francs at the rate posted by the European Central Bank. Transactions in other currencies are converted into Swiss francs at the spot rate quoted on the internet at the time of posting. Monetary assets and liabilities are translated into Swiss francs at the exchange rate in effect at the balance sheet date. Exchange gains or losses from translations of monetary items are recognized as expenses.

i) Use of Estimates

The preparation of financial statements in conformity with IFAC International Public Sector Accounting Standards requires management to make estimates and assumptions that affect the amounts reported in the financial statements and accompanying notes. These estimates are based on management's best knowledge of current events and actions that the IPU may undertake in the future. Actual results could differ from these estimates.

j) Consolidation

The consolidated financial statements include the accounts of the Union and the accounts of technical cooperation projects carried out with third party funding. All internal transactions and balances are eliminated on consolidation.

k) Changes in Accounting Policies

None.

3. Accounts Receivable

(a) At 31 December 2009, there were 34 Members and Associate Members with accounts in arrears. Seven(a) of them would be deprived of their voting rights subject to Article 5.2 of the Statutes. One Member (b) was liable for suspension under Article 4.2 of the Statutes.

Member or Associate Member	2009	2008	2007	2006	Special Debt	Total
Afghanistan ^a	18,700	20,600	1,410	-	-	40,710
Albania	20,400	-	-	-	-	20,400
Bolivia	20,400	21,010	-	-	-	41,410
Bosnia & Herzegovina	22,400	-	-	-	-	22,400
Cameroon	20,730	-	-	-	-	20,730
Comoros	18,600	10,250	-	-	-	28,850
Congo	18,700	14,370	-	-	-	33,070
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	22,400	24,150	-	-	-	46,550
Democratic Republic of the Congo	7,657	-	-	-	-	7,657
Denmark	118,100	-	-	-	-	118,100
Dominican Republic	24,700	-	-	-	-	24,700
Gambia ^a	18,700	20,490	11,685	-	-	50,875
Guatemala ^a	25,200	25,160	-	-	-	50,360
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	4,300	-	-	-	-	4,300
Iraq	22,000	-	-	-	-	22,000
Kenya	2,650	-	-	-	-	2,650
Kyrgyzstan	1,810	-	-	-	-	1,810
Liberia ^a	18,700	20,490	17,856	-	38,166	95,212
Mali	18,700	-	-	-	-	18,700
Mauritania	18,583	-	-	-	-	18,583
Mexico	108,850	-	-	-	-	108,850
Montenegro ^a	18,700	20,600	-	-	-	39,300
Palau	18,700	10,717	-	-	-	29,417
Palestine	18,600	10,250	-	-	-	28,850
Sao Tome and Principe ^a	18,700	20,490	-	-	-	39,190
Senegal	19,800	-	-	-	-	19,800
Sierra Leone	18,600	10,250	-	-	-	28,850
Somalia ^{a,b}	18,700	20,490	21,880	23,370	-	84,440
Sudan	21,000	3,383	-	-	-	24,383
Tajikistan	19,300	2,716	-	-	-	22,016
United Republic of Tanzania	20,400	-	-	-	-	20,400
Viet Nam	23,500	-	-	-	-	23,500
Andean Parliament	1,500	1,576	-	-	-	3,076
WAEMU	900	-	-	-	-	900
Totals 2009	770,680	256,992	52,831	23,370	38,166	1,142,039
<i>Comparative Figures 2008</i>	<i>594,553</i>	<i>271,850</i>	<i>75,933</i>	<i>8,405</i>	<i>55,618</i>	<i>1,006,359</i>
						Less doubtful accounts (195,446)
						Net receivable from Members 946,593

^a Subject to Article 5.2 of the Statutes

^b Subject to Article 4.2 of the Statutes

(b) The IPU advanced 20,000 euros to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean that is being repaid in four annual instalments ending in 2011. As of 31 December 2009 the remaining balance owing is 10,000 euros.

4. Allowance for Doubtful Accounts

The IPU has established an allowance for doubtful accounts. This allowance is the best estimate of accounts, including Member contributions, that have been recorded as income and set up as accounts receivable, but which may never be received.

At the beginning of 2009, the provision for doubtful accounts was CHF 236,730. During the year, the membership of Guinea and Niger were suspended when their parliaments were unconstitutionally dissolved and their debts were written off. After a provision of CHF 19,207, the allowance for doubtful accounts stood at CHF 195,446 representing 17 per cent of the outstanding arrears.

	2009	2008
Opening Balance	236,730	236,730
Revaluation	-	-
Provision	19,207	-
Statutory Write-Offs	(60,491)	-
Write-Off Uncollectible Debt	-	-
Closing Balance	195,446	236,730

5. Advances and Receivables from Donors

The Inter-Parliamentary Union receives funds from several donors for the implementation of various activities. Total disbursements from voluntary funds in 2009 were CHF 2,017,767, including 1,878,778 of direct costs. At 31 December 2009 the net advance of voluntary contributions was CHF 1,372,661.

Project	Funder	Unexpended Balance of Prior Commitments	New/ (Expired) Commitment in 2009	Funds used in 2009	Balance of Commitment	(Advances)/ Receivables
Equatorial Guinea	Equatorial Guinea	244,732	-	18,045	226,687	(227,924)
	European Community	742,500	-	35,048	707,452	(253,209)
Pakistan	UNDP	18,621	-	7,624	10,997	(10,997)
RD Congo	UNDP	-	300,618	187,066	113,552	(113,552)
Maldives	UNDP	52,300	-	3,538	48,762	-
Sierra Leone	UNDP	-	48,188	48,188	-	4,176
Cambodia	UNDP	-	20,035	20,035	-	-
Violence against Children	UNICEF	-	9,288	9,288	-	-
Security Sector	DCAF	-	10,000	10,000	-	-
Budget Seminar	ACIC	5,833	-	5,833	-	-
Handbook on Statelessness	UNHCR	36,527	-	14,805	21,722	(19,537)
Map of Women in Parliament	UNDESA	-	2,212	2,212	-	-
Burundi Women	UNDEF	61,177	(5,507)	55,670	-	(5,507)
Human Rights	DFAE	35,541	(35,541)	-	-	(17,541)
Human Rights	Finland	90,000	-	12,150	77,850	(78,606)
HIV/AIDS	UNAIDS	-	24,832	24,832	-	-
Global Programme Support	SIDA	232,293	419,673	513,964	138,002	(138,002)
Gender Issues	Irish Aid	229,269	302,520	374,837	156,952	(156,952)
Equality in Politics	CIDA	228,962	378,207	373,037	234,132	(234,132)
Reconciliation	CIDA	383,620	200,880	290,050	294,450	(102,516)
Female Genital Mutilation	Norway et al	29,907	-	11,545	18,362	(18,362)
Total	CHF	2,391,282	1,675,405	2,017,767	2,048,920	1,372,661

Indirect costs	138,989	Receivable	10,204
Direct costs	1,878,778	Advanced	(1,382,865)

6. Prepaid Expenses

The IPU has already paid some expenses that relate to 2010 for items such as rent, subscriptions and postage meter deposits. These disbursements have been reported as current assets.

7. Property, Plant and Equipment

The IPU has a Headquarters building and annex in Grand-Saconnex, Switzerland. The building is located on land owned by the Canton of Geneva, which has been set aside for the use of the IPU for the next 43 years. The terms of a lease agreement were finalized during 2009 between the Canton of Geneva, the Federal Government of Switzerland and the IPU. Said agreement is awaiting notarization, which is expected to occur during 2010.

As of 31 December 2008, the IPU had invested CHF 9,356,495 on new construction and renovations of the property, not counting grants received. During 2009, an additional CHF 9,287 was recorded as additions to the building premises for modification of office space.

Depreciation is recorded in accordance with the policy described in note 2(d). A detailed inventory is kept for all computer-related hardware and software as this is routinely replaced and upgraded and represents a significant investment.

Year	Buildings and Grounds		Furnishings		Information, Technology and Communications Equipment		Vehicles	
	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008	2009	2008
Opening Balance	8,233,715	8,420,845	130,530	217,699	81,052	67,350	39,480	7,810
Additions	9,287	-	3,499	6,230	43,659	41,818	-	39,480
Depreciation	(187,130)	(187,130)	(80,124)	(93,399)	(38,570)	(28,115)	(7,896)	(7,810)
Closing Balance	8,055,872	8,233,715	53,905	130,530	86,141	81,052	31,584	39,480
Gross Carrying Amount	9,365,782	9,356,495	778,203	774,704	319,811	276,152	78,534	78,534
Accumulated Depreciation	(1,309,910)	(1,122,780)	(724,297)	(644,174)	(233,670)	(195,100)	(46,950)	(39,054)
Net Carrying Amount	8,055,872	8,233,715	53,906	130,530	86,141	81,052	31,584	39,480

8. Investment Income

In accordance with the financial regulations and the investment policy approved by the Executive Committee, monies not needed for immediate requirements are invested in a portfolio of term deposits, mutual funds and bonds. Total returns on investments in 2009 were CHF 149,926.

	2009	2008
Interest	77,196	223,476
Capital Gains (Losses)	72,730	(148,239)
Total Investment Income	149,926	75,237

9. Long-Term Debt

The Inter-Parliamentary Union has a CHF 9,480,000 loan from the Federal Government of Switzerland for the construction and renovation of the Headquarters premises, of which CHF 8,152,800 is outstanding. The loan has a 50-year term maturing in 2052 and is interest free.

The principal amounts payable in each of the next five years are:

Year	CHF
2010	189,600
2011	189,600
2012	189,600
2013	189,600
2014	189,600

10. Other Long-term Liabilities

- (a) The IPU guarantees a legacy pension fund that will pay pensions to former employees and some current employees of the IPU based on various factors, including the number of years of service and salary at retirement. The pension liability, which is the difference between the adjusted market value of the assets of the pension fund and the present value of the accrued pension liabilities is shown as a net liability on the balance sheet of the IPU. The adjusted market value of the assets has been determined using a three year moving market average method based on the year end valuation of the fund for the current and preceding two years adjusted for cash flow. The present value of the accrued pension liabilities is estimated by management using 2008 Swiss life tables and a 3 per cent discount rate. The net actuarial liability shown on the balance sheet is CHF 2,044,000.

Amount in CHF	2009	2008
Accrued Pension Liability	13,395,000	13,756,000
Pension Fund Assets	11,351,000	12,370,000
Net Liability	2,044,000	1,386,000

- (b) The IPU has contracts with employees that require the payment of certain benefits upon retirement or separation. These benefits include grants for removal expenses and a reinstatement premium as well as allowing employees to carry forward and eventually cash out up to 60 days of annual leave credits. At 31 December 2009, the total liability of benefits payable to staff was:

Amount in CHF	2009	2008
Reinstatement Premiums	694,223	623,596
Encashment of unused leave	787,470	707,974
Grants for Removal Expenses	342,000	360,000
Total	1,823,693	1,691,570

11. Commitments and Contingencies

The IPU has a nine-year lease expiring in 2012 for office accommodation at 220 East 42nd Street in New York, USA. Projected future lease payments are as follows:

Year	Agreement amount	Equivalent
2010	USD 127,852	CHF 132,167
2011	USD 130,803	CHF 135,218
2012	USD 11,004	CHF 11,375

12. Restricted Funds

- (a) The Inter-Parliamentary Union has established a reserve to pay for major repairs to the Headquarters building at some later date. In September 2001, the Governing Council resolved to contribute CHF 55,000 per annum to this reserve beginning in 2007.

	2009	2008
Opening Balance	97,694	55,000
Contributions	55,000	55,000
Expenditures	0	(12,306)
Closing Balance	152,694	97,694

- (b) The Inter-Parliamentary Union has established a reserve for offsetting carbon emissions from IPU activities, especially those involving travel. In 2009, an amount of CHF 34,200 was contributed to the reserve to compensate for emissions of 908 tonnes of CO₂ from regular activities. As approved by the Governing Council, CHF 65,262 was drawn from the reserve to fund the parliamentary meeting on climate change held in Copenhagen.

	2009	2008
Opening Balance	46,200	46,200
Contributions	34,200	0
Expenditures	(65,262)	0
Closing Balance	15,138	46,200

13. Contingent Liabilities

Several staff members have received notices of tax assessment from the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry of France relating to income earned from the IPU between 2001 and 2009. The IPU is contractually obligated to reimburse to staff members any national taxes paid in respect to income earned from the IPU. Discussions between the IPU and the relevant authorities are continuing with a view to find a satisfactory resolution of the taxation issue.

14. Staff Assessment

The total amount of staff assessment on staff salaries was CHF 1,326,842. In accordance with contractual obligations, an amount of CHF 104,536 was rebated to cover national income taxes that were imposed on staff members who were deemed fiscal residents of France and the United States.

	2009	2008
Gross Staff Assessment	1,326,842	1,229,098
Reimbursements		
- France	85,030	52,005
- United States of America	19,506	609
Total	104,536	52,614
Net Staff Assessment	1,222,306	1,176,484

15. Program Support Costs

The IPU charges program support costs for the projects it implements with funding from other agencies. In 2009, the IPU collected fees in the amount of CHF 138,989 on project direct costs of CHF 1,878,778.

16. Other Income

Other income of CHF 14,806 includes sales of publications, room rentals, and extraordinary income.

17. Comparative Amounts

Certain comparative amounts have been reclassified to conform to the financial statement presentation adopted in the current year.

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