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Geneva, 19 August 2008

Dear Madam President,
Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to invite your Parliament to attend the Sixth Information Seminar on Parliaments and the CEDAW, which will focus this year on *Addressing Laws that Discriminate against Women*. The seminar is organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and will be held at the *Centre international de conférences (CICG)* on 16 October 2008, immediately following the 119th IPU Assembly.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the most comprehensive international legal instrument addressing women's rights and provides a framework for promoting gender equality. The implementation of the CEDAW is monitored by a United Nations treaty body, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which examines reports from States parties and issues concluding observations and recommendations for follow-up action.

The seminar, which aims to strengthen parliament's role in the reporting process, primarily targets members of parliaments from those countries whose periodic report has been considered by the CEDAW Committee in the course of this year or will be considered early next year. However, members from other parliaments may also attend, subject to availability of space. This year, the parliaments concerned are those of:

Armenia, Bahrain, Belgium, Bhutan, Cameroon, Canada, Dominica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Iceland, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Lithuania, Madagascar, Mongolia, Nigeria, Portugal, Rwanda, Slovakia, Slovenia, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay and Yemen.

A preliminary agenda is attached for your information, together with a registration form. The *Handbook for Parliamentarians on the CEDAW and its Optional Protocol*, published in 2003 by the IPU and UNDAW and widely distributed among parliaments, will be used as a reference tool for the seminar and can be downloaded from <http://www.ipu.org/english/handbks.htm#wom-protocol>. Several experts, including a member of the Committee, a member of the Committee's Secretariat and a member of parliament with experience in this field, will facilitate the seminar.

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Parliaments are invited to send two members, preferably a man and a woman who have expertise in the field of women's rights and the status of women and/or who are members of a parliamentary committee dealing with this topic. Please note that the invitation is also extended to one or two parliamentary staff dealing with these issues. Given the date of the seminar, you may wish to ensure that they are included in your parliament's delegation to the 119th Assembly.

We would appreciate confirmation of your Parliament's participation in this event by 22 September at the latest. Please note, however, that the space available for this event is limited and registration will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. In due course, we will notify those parliaments whose delegations have been registered.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anders', with a large, sweeping flourish that loops back to the right.

Anders B. Johansson
Secretary General