



A PARLIAMENTARY RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

*Conference for Chairpersons and Members of Parliamentary Bodies
Dealing with Gender Equality
GENEVA, CICG, 2-4 December 2008*

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

1. **OBJECTIVES OF THE SEMINAR**

Violence against women remains a major issue on the international human rights agenda. It is a universal problem, differing only in scope and nature from one country to another. It occurs in the broad context of gender-based discrimination with regards to unequal power relations in both public and private spheres. In the private sphere, it encompasses family and intimate violence, including harmful cultural practices and traditions. Within the public sphere, this includes sexual violence, harassment and exploitation. States, through their agents or their public policies, may also inadvertently condone VAW. This is manifested through inadequate laws or ineffective implementation of laws, effectively allowing perpetrators of violence against women go unpunished for their acts.

The three-day Conference will bring together members of parliament from around the world to strategise and exchange experience on what can be done to strengthen their action to combat VAW. It will provide an opportunity for members of parliament to take stock of the situation, discuss the various types of violence against women and focus on concrete parliamentary initiatives that can be taken to combat such violence. Specific attention will be paid to legislative frameworks and effective enforcement.

2. **PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME**

The provisional programme of the Seminar is attached.

3. **ORGANIZATION OF PROCEEDINGS**

Members of parliament and/or experts and representatives of international organizations will introduce the topics on the agenda. The emphasis will be on discussion, and everything will be done to leave ample time for a free exchange of views.

In accordance with IPU practice, all participants will have equal speaking rights. In order for the discussions to be as fruitful and diverse as possible, the following arrangements will be made:

- (a) There will be no list of speakers on any agenda item. After an agenda item has been introduced by the resource persons, the floor will be open to participants for questions and comments.
- (b) Experience has shown that pre-prepared statements are not suited to this kind of event. Subject to arrangements that the Chair may decide to make depending on the circumstances, oral statements may be allowed but should not exceed five minutes. Participants may, however, speak several times on each item, particularly to respond to other statements.
- (c) The IPU Secretariat will prepare a report on the proceedings of the Seminar, for distribution to the participating parliaments, the IPU governing bodies and interested organizations.

4. **PARTICIPATION**

All national parliaments are invited to this event. It is proposed that delegations be composed of two parliamentarians who are members of committees dealing directly or indirectly with the status of women and gender equality issues or who are experts in this field, along with their advisers. Where possible, the principle of gender balance should be respected in the composition of delegations.

5. LANGUAGES

The Secretariat of the Inter-Parliamentary Union will provide simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Documents will be distributed in English and, when possible, in French.

6. VENUE AND DATES

The Seminar will be held from 2 to 4 December 2008 at the Centre international de conférences (CICG) in Geneva.

7. REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES

The parliaments participating in the Seminar **are kindly requested to make known the composition of their delegations before 21 November 2008 on the attached registration form.**

This information should be sent to the following address:

▶ Inter-Parliamentary Union	Telephone: +41 22 919 41 50
Chemin du Pommier, N° 5	Fax: +41 22 919 41 60
Case postale 330	E-mail: postbox@mail.ipu.org
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex / Geneva	
Switzerland	

8. TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Delegates will be responsible for making their own travel arrangements.

9. VISAS

Strict provisions are in force regarding entry into Switzerland and entry is refused to any person who does not hold the required visa. Delegates requiring an entry visa must obtain one from the Swiss consulate or diplomatic mission responsible for the necessary arrangements in their country of residence.

Moreover, Geneva Airport is located on the Swiss-French border and also has a French entry point. Some flights coming from Paris or other French airports to Geneva are considered as internal flights. Therefore, delegates may wish to check if a French visa is required for certain nationalities when passing through a French airport en route to Geneva.

10. HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Matters concerning hotel accommodations are to be handled by the participants, either through their country's mission in Geneva, through their preferred tourist operator or through the Geneva Tourist Office. Should delegations wish to use the services offered by the Geneva Tourist Office, they are kindly requested to use the attached hotel reservation form. Hotel bookings can also be made through the Geneva Tourism Office's website (http://www.geneve-tourisme.ch/?rubrique=0000000827&lang=_eng). However, attention is drawn to the fact that, in keeping with the practice of all hotels in Geneva, only reservation forms returned with details of a credit card as a guarantee will be confirmed. The hotel reservation form should be returned directly to the Geneva Tourist Office by no later than **21 November 2008**, with copy to the IPU Secretariat.

11. TRANSPORTATION IN GENEVA

No transportation services will be provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

12. RECEPTION

A reception for participants will be hosted at IPU Headquarters on 2 December, at 6 p.m.