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Migration: the human rights perspective

Seminar for members of parliamentary committees on human rights
and other committees addressing migration issues

Geneva, 24-26 October 2007

Geneva, 25 July 2007

Dear Mr. President,
Dear Madam President,

Since 2004, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has been organizing yearly seminars on a topical human rights theme for parliamentarians who, by virtue of their participation in relevant parliamentary committees, can take action and share valuable experiences in promoting and protecting human rights. Through this letter, I would like to draw your attention to this year's seminar, which will address the question of migration from a human rights perspective. It will take place from 24 to 26 October 2007 at IPU Headquarters in Geneva.

Migration is often seen as a purely development and economic issue dominated by discussions on global and regional migratory flows and their impact on entire populations. However, a closer look at migration brings out its human side and the fundamental rights that are so often at stake. The seminar will address this angle of migration; it will look at its pull and push factors and how they impact on human rights. It will also examine the challenges of integration and explore ways of managing irregular migration in a human rights-compatible way and fighting inhuman or discriminatory treatment of migrants. In each of these situations, there will be a strong focus on the international legal and policy framework that exists to safeguard human rights norms and the contribution that parliaments and their members can make.

The seminar is being organized in collaboration with two United Nations bodies, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It will be open to all members of parliamentary committees that deal with migration, especially committees on human rights and on social, labour and economic affairs. The topics on the agenda will be introduced by members of parliament and international experts. As is customary, the emphasis will be on discussion, and everything will be done to leave ample time for a free exchange of views. Interpretation into Arabic, English, French and Spanish will be provided.

Please find enclosed a provisional programme for the three-day event. A final programme, including the list of panellists, will be sent to you before the end of September 2007. In the meantime, you are kindly invited to complete and return the enclosed registration form to our Secretariat no later than 31 August 2007. In this regard, I should inform you that the conference room at IPU Headquarters has limited seating capacity, hence the reason why parliaments are requested to limit delegations to a maximum of three persons (including advisers and secretaries). Please note that all documents regarding the seminar will also be posted - and regularly updated as necessary - as of the end of July 2007 on the IPU website (www.ipu.org).

I would like to point out that participants shall be responsible for all matters relating to visas, hotel accommodation and transportation. To facilitate hotel bookings, I am enclosing a reservation form which participants may wish to use themselves. Participants are kindly requested to forward their reservation forms to Genève Tourisme, which will be responsible for all matters relating to accommodation.

Finally, in order to make the best use of the seminar and to ensure proper follow-up, I would be grateful if each participant could complete and return the brief questionnaire hereto attached to help us understand the current challenges facing parliaments in the area of migration and the parliamentary action that has recently been taken or is planned for the near future.

I look forward to the participation of your parliament at the Seminar.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anders B. Johnsson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anders B. Johnsson
Secretary General

Annex: Provisional programme
Registration form
Hotel reservation form
Questionnaire