



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy. For everyone.

# Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

United Nations Headquarters, New York  
31 August to 2 September 2015



Conference  
Item 4

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## Panel discussion on *Parliamentary oversight: Challenges and opportunities*

10 a.m. – 1 p.m., 1 September 2015  
Conference Room 4 ((Level -1B))

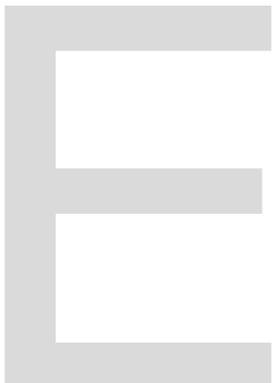
Almost all constitutions give parliament the power to oversee the executive and to hold it to account for its actions. The oversight function is generally recognized as one of the *raison d'être* of parliament, alongside law-making and representation. Parliament is at the apex of a complex set of institutions, including other public agencies, the media and civil society, which hold the government to account.

Parliamentary oversight gives people a voice in the management of public affairs. It is a unique role and responsibility for parliament within the democratic system of governance. It is a central mechanism for ensuring the balance of powers between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government. Parliamentary oversight of States' international obligations provides the link between decision-making at international and national levels, in areas as diverse as human rights, climate change and trade. But the impact of parliamentary oversight is often difficult to identify, and is periodically called into question.

The panel discussion will explore the perspectives of Speaker of Parliament on issues such as:

- To what extent does parliament exercise its oversight powers in practice? What are the challenges and opportunities for parliament to strengthen its oversight role today?
- How responsive is the government to parliamentary oversight and how could government responsiveness be increased?
- To what extent does the Speaker have a responsibility to defend, or increase, parliament's power to hold government to account?
- What are the motivations for individual parliamentarians to carry out oversight? What value does the public place on parliament's oversight activities?
- How does parliament cooperate, or compete, with other institutions of oversight?

The views of Speakers of Parliament will contribute to the preparation of the second *Global Parliamentary Report* on "Parliament's power to hold government to account: Realities and perspectives", which should develop practical recommendations for ways to strengthen parliament's power to hold government to account. In 2012, the first *Global Parliamentary Report* on "The changing nature of parliamentary representation" was published by IPU and UNDP and is available at [www.ipu.org/gpr](http://www.ipu.org/gpr).



### **Organization of the panel discussion**

This interactive panel discussion will be conducted in interview style, without official statements. After an exchange of questions and reflections between the moderator and panelists, participants will contribute their own thoughts and pose questions for further discussion.

The panel discussion is open to Speakers of Parliament and other registered participants in the Fourth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. Participants will be seated at their country nameplates.

Participants can signal their wish to speak by pressing on the button at each desk. The lineup will be managed by an electronic system. The list of speakers will appear on a screen in front of the moderator at the podium.

Participants are encouraged to make brief comments or questions that focus on challenges, innovations and good practices. Prepared speeches are strongly discouraged.

### **Panelists**

- Ms. Christine Defraigne, President of the Senate, Belgium
- Mr. Marco Antonio Nunez Lozano, President of the Chamber of Deputies, Chile
- Ms. Alix Boyd Knights, Speaker of the House of Assembly, Dominica
- Mr. Setya Novanto, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Indonesia
- Mr. Justin Muturi, Speaker of the National Assembly, Kenya
- Mr. John Bercow, Speaker of the House of Commons, United Kingdom

### **Moderator**

- Dr. Robert Nakamura, Professor Emeritus, University at Albany, State University of New York