

ANNUAL PARLIAMENTARY HEARING AT THE UNITED NATIONS
31 October – 1 November 2005

Monday, 31 October 2005

11:30 a.m. – 1.30 p.m.

Session I: Conclusions of the 2005 United Nations Summit

Remarks by Assistant Secretary-General Robert Orr
(Delivered on his behalf by Mr. Gennady Gatilov, Principal Officer,
Strategic Planning Unit, Executive Office of the Secretary-General)

Quote from the 2005 World Summit outcome (para. 171 entitled “Cooperation between the United Nations and parliaments”):

“We call for strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and national and regional parliaments, in particular through the Inter-Parliamentary Union, with a view to furthering all aspects of the Millennium Declaration in all fields of the work of the United Nations and ensuring the effective implementation of United Nations reform.”

- The involvement of Parliaments around the world is crucial if we are to achieve the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.
- For **development**, good governance is part of the Monterrey Consensus and a prerequisite not only for the attraction of external development assistance but also for the best use of that assistance, international investment and domestic resources, towards achieving the MDGs and beyond. The role of Parliaments is central in enacting appropriate legislation to promote good governance and fight corruption, and holding the respective Executives accountable to high standards. If this is more important for developing countries, the Parliaments in developed countries are the ones to authorize increased funds for ODA, as per the commitments made by the EU and the G-8. Furthermore, Parliaments of developing and developed countries should cooperate, exchanging know-how and encouraging movement towards both good governance and development assistance.
- Respect for **human rights and the rule of law** is the basis for every well-functioning society, makes the lives of citizens fulfilling, allows the expression of the creative power of individuals to the benefit of all, and is the best means to prevent conflict. Acceding to all international human rights instruments is an important way through which countries – through their Parliaments – can pave the way to that, and of course guaranteeing monitoring of implementation in practice. Parliaments should work closely with the new Human Rights Council, once it is up and running, hopefully in the coming months.
- Parliaments should also take steps to integrate into national legislation the protection of the rights of **vulnerable groups, like refugees, displaced persons and migrant workers**.

- I would not like to include **women** in the “vulnerable groups” category, but it is fair to say that, despite being half of the population and often the most productive half, they still fall behind in terms of rights, on paper and certainly in practice. Promoting those rights through legislation, making sure they are respected, and increasing the participation of women in public life is a major contribution to the welfare of all citizens and to the future of all nations.
- In the area of **counter-terrorism**, the leaders at the World Summit encouraged all States to accede without delay to all international conventions and protocols against terrorism and to implement them. Again, the role of legislatures is very important in the ratification of these instruments, which govern international cooperation in combating a real scourge. Terrorism attempts to undermine the foundations of organized/civilized society and has no qualms at whom it targets – today it is a developed country, the next day a developing one; one day the victims are mostly Christian or Jewish, the next day they are Muslim or Hindu. Hopefully, we shall soon also have a comprehensive convention on international terrorism to be added to the legal armoury for fighting this scourge, with due respect always paid to human rights.
- As stated by the Speakers of Parliament in the concluding Declaration of the Second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament held at UNHQ just before the September Summit, “Parliament embodies **democracy**”. Parliaments are the centerpiece of democracy, should be the outcome of democratic elections, and express the will of the people whom parliamentarians represent. The UN and Parliaments are and must be even more mutually supportive in promoting the principle and practices of democracy, the latter of course in concurrence with the history and traditions of each nation.
- The expertise Parliaments possess regarding democratic governance, in both their diversity and unity of purpose, is a valuable resource when a country emerges from conflict. The Outcome Document has called for the new UN **Peacebuilding** Commission to be operational by the end of this year. Supporting its work is a major area where the strategic partnership between the UN and Parliaments, through the IPU, can find productive expression and outlet.
- Finally, allow me to refer to the important role Parliaments play in sustaining the UN in its resources, as they approve their countries’ **contributions to the UN** regular budget, as well as peacekeeping budgets, and development and humanitarian programmes. The added value of the UN, its funds, programmes and specialized agencies is such that national contributions are very modest by comparison. Of course, as UN management we are doing our best to improve the way we make use of the resources you provide. The Secretary-General is working with the General Assembly to promote further measures in that respect, to guarantee greater efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. We need a strong UN in order to deal effectively with the threats and challenges that confront the international community, each country and every individual on earth, in the 21st century.