



Inter-Parliamentary Union  
For democracy, for everyone.

# First IPU Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians

## Taking Democracy to Task

### Information Note

#### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

Young people between the ages of 15 and 25 account for one fifth of the world's population today. In many cases, young people already actively participate in informal political activities, such as online activism, demonstrations and boycotts. Recent years have witnessed the engagement of young people in the streets of Cairo, Tunis, Athens, Madrid, Bangkok, New York, Montreal and Rio de Janeiro, among others.

While in some cases this engagement has made history, young people's dwindling interest in formal political activity, including voting and party membership, and a shaken trust in politicians and political parties, is a real threat to the future of democracy.

Concerned by the patent decline in young people's engagement in politics<sup>1</sup>, the 122<sup>nd</sup> IPU Assembly (Bangkok, March-April 2010) adopted a resolution on *Youth Participation in the Democratic Process* to provide policy guidance and mark the International Year of Youth<sup>2</sup>. The IPU resolution calls on the IPU and its Member Parliaments to promote youth participation, make young people in politics more visible and reflect a youth perspective in the political agenda.

In 2013, the IPU established the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, a formal and permanent body dedicated to enhancing the quantitative and qualitative participation of young people in parliaments and in the IPU.

In 2014, the Forum is convening the First IPU Conference of Young Parliamentarians.

The Conference will provide a platform for reflection and debate for young leaders in politics and other fields on common concerns that are challenging democracy today.

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<sup>1</sup> As attested in research presented to Democracy Forum (International IDEA, 2013)

<sup>2</sup> Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 64/134

## **VENUE AND DATE**

The Conference will take place on 10 and 11 October 2014 at the International Conference Centre in Geneva (CICG), Switzerland.

## **PARTICIPATION**

The Conference is open to young members of parliament. Parliaments are invited to send a gender-balanced delegation of a maximum of four members, including their youngest members of parliament, below the age of 45.

Young leaders as well as representatives of youth movements and organizations from around the world will also be invited to attend the Conference.

International organizations that work on youth-related matters will be invited as well.

The Worldwide Support for Development (WSD) is generously providing the financial support for the organization of the Conference. WSD is a Japanese non-profit organization engaged in international humanitarian actions and projects to strengthen global governance and society under the leadership of the eminent philanthropist Dr Haruhisa Handa.

## **THEMES OF THE CONFERENCE**

The Conference will provide a platform for reflection and debate for young parliamentarians on the following common concerns that are challenging democracy today:

- Are young people destined to remain in the margins of the democratic process? Or can other scenarios be envisaged?
- What forms of political participation are young people using today?
- How to get more young people involved in political decision-making?
- How to strengthen confidence of young people in the power of the ballot box?
- How can parliaments adapt to the changing public demands for representation?
- How can political parties establish stronger connections with young people?
- How can young people and parliaments share the responsibility of ensuring that legislation responds to young people's concerns?

## **SPECIAL SESSION**

A special session of the Conference will be devoted to an open debate with young leaders from different sectors and representatives of youth movements and organizations.

## **ORGANIZATION OF PROCEEDINGS**

In keeping with usual IPU practice, all participants will have equal speaking rights. In order to ensure that the discussions are as fruitful and enriching as possible, the following rules will apply:

- There will be no list of speakers on any agenda item. After the resource persons have introduced an agenda item, the floor will be open to participants for questions and comments.
- Experience has shown that this kind of meeting does not lend itself to the reading out of prepared statements. Subject to arrangements that the Chair may make to suit the circumstances, oral contributions may not exceed three minutes. Participants may speak several times on each item, particularly to respond to other statements.

A General Rapporteur will sum up the work of the Conference at its concluding session.

## **DOCUMENTS**

Participants will receive the written texts of the presentations by the resource persons as they become available. Documents will be distributed in English and French where possible.

To the extent possible and for the information of participants, the IPU Secretariat will make available background documentation on the issues under discussion.

Participants wishing to distribute to their colleagues relevant documentation will be required to provide it in sufficient quantities and place it on a table set aside for that purpose.

## **LANGUAGES**

The IPU Secretariat will provide simultaneous interpretation into and from English, French, Arabic and Spanish.

## **HOTEL ACCOMMODATION**

October is a particularly busy month for hotels in Geneva. Delegates are therefore advised to make their hotel reservations as soon as possible.

Those delegations from countries with a Permanent Mission in Geneva are invited to contact their respective Mission, as they are accustomed to receiving delegations to UN meetings and handling hotel reservations. Many of them have agreements for preferential rates with hotels close to the CICG.

For those parliaments without diplomatic representation in Geneva, as well as Associate Members and official observers, the IPU Secretariat has pre-booked a limited number of rooms at two hotels in Geneva (Ibis Genève Centre Nations – 3-star and the Warwick – 4-star, with prices ranging from CHF 193 to 230, without breakfast).

The booking conditions are very strict and delegates are advised to respect the deadline of each hotel as indicated on the form, as after this date, the preferential negotiated rates will no longer be available and the rooms will be released. Please contact the IPU Secretariat should you wish to receive the corresponding hotel reservation form by fax: +41 22 919 41 60 or e-mail: [postbox@ipu.org](mailto:postbox@ipu.org).

In keeping with the practice of hotels in Geneva, only reservations made with a credit card guarantee will be confirmed. It is also possible to make reservations online via the Tourist Office's website at: [www.geneve-tourisme.ch/en/accommodation](http://www.geneve-tourisme.ch/en/accommodation).

## **VISAS**

Switzerland is an associate member of the Schengen Agreement and part of the Schengen area. The Visa Information System (VIS) was introduced in the Schengen area in October 2011, which stores biometric data (fingerprints and facial image) of the Schengen visa applicant. All Swiss embassies and consulates are gradually being connected to the VIS system.

All visa applicants are required to make an appointment with the Swiss embassy/consulate and submit and register their biometric data in person. This data remains valid in the VIS system for a period of five years. An official document explaining the implementation of the VIS system, registration of biometric data and the rollout timetable for Swiss embassies/consulates connected to the VIS system is available at [www.bfm.admin.ch/content/bfm/en/home/themen/einreise/einfuehrung\\_vis.html](http://www.bfm.admin.ch/content/bfm/en/home/themen/einreise/einfuehrung_vis.html).

The time needed to obtain a visa depends greatly on local circumstances. In addition to this, Switzerland has signed agreements with certain countries where it is not represented by a diplomatic or consular entity. Under certain conditions these agreements allow for the issuing of visas by a Schengen State in a country where Switzerland is not represented. It is therefore highly recommended that applicants enquire directly with the Swiss embassy/consulate in their country of residence or consult the appropriate website. Appointments for submitting and registering biometric data must therefore be taken well in advance, as per information provided by the Swiss authorities.

Kindly note that following Switzerland's entry into the Schengen area, visas are no longer issued upon arrival at Geneva International Airport.

### **MEDICAL FACILITIES**

During the Conference, first aid facilities will be available at the venue. All other medical services and prescriptions will be at the participants' own expense.

### **REGISTRATION AND INFORMATION DESK**

A Registration and Information Desk will be available to participants at the Conference venue. It shall operate from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. on 10 October.

Participants should register with this service at their arrival to the CICC.