



**REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE IPU ON HIS ACTIVITIES
SINCE THE 191st SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**

Over the past five months, I have represented the IPU at a number of international events and carried out several activities in my capacity as President of the IPU. I have remained in close contact with the Secretary General, who has consulted me on a number of pressing political and organizational issues.

In November 2012, in an official press release I called for an immediate end to hostilities in the Middle East and for the resumption of serious negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, stressing that peace was the only way forward. I stated unequivocally that the IPU would support all political initiatives to restart dialogue and bring peace to the region.

Also in November I received in my native Morocco French Senator Nicole Fontaine, former President of the European Parliament.

I travelled to New York in early December 2012 to attend the Parliamentary Hearing at the United Nations. The theme of the Hearing, "A road less travelled: Parliamentary approaches to conflict prevention, reconciliation and peace building", clearly struck a chord with both organizations. In my opening statement, I underscored once again the significance of the far-reaching resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly in May 2012 on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU.

I reiterated the IPU's stance - that parliament must be at the heart of reconciliation and peace-building efforts. I reminded participants that parliaments were not just about making laws. They also had the power to hold governments to account and were a place to thrash out differences and forge compromise. I urged delegates to continue to act as MPs, not as diplomats, at the United Nations. I encouraged them to take the floor and make spontaneous and spirited interventions, debating, arguing and challenging each other just as they do in their own parliament. From what I could tell, they heeded my call.

In my New Year message, I acknowledged the great strides we have made in implementing our Strategy for 2012-2017, especially in making the IPU better known, more focused and a stronger advocate of democracy. I underscored our commitment to bring democratic change to the Arab Spring countries - Egypt, Libya and Tunisia - and highlighted the valuable work we are doing with these parliaments. I also mentioned the assistance we are providing to the parliament in Myanmar, which was witnessing enormous political change.

I applauded our Members for adopting the ground-breaking *Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments* at the Québec Assembly, and urged them to implement it in their own parliaments. I underscored the IPU's commitment to bring peace and democracy to Syria and Mali and expressed my personal wish to see the IPU add a meaningful parliamentary dimension to the next generation of development goals.

Owing to parliamentary commitments, I was unable to attend the 21st Annual Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum, which took place in Vladivostok from 27 to 31 January. I nevertheless sent a message to the participants underscoring that the IPU values the long-standing cooperation and friendship with the Forum and looks forward to further strengthening their close ties.

Earlier this month, I represented the IPU at the parliamentary event organized by the IPU and UN Women on the occasion of the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York on "Parliamentary strategies for tackling violence against women and girls". In my opening address I underscored the fact that since 2008 the IPU has been working to engage parliaments in taking the lead in tackling violence against women. Our commitment is premised on the fact that this is a global challenge that spares no country.

I appealed to both women and men parliamentarians to become involved in the fight to guarantee women and girls a life free of violence. Strong and comprehensive laws, I reiterated, can transform women's lives if properly implemented and that was where we, as members of parliament, could make a difference.

I condemned in the strongest terms violence that targeted women in the political arena. Women had as much right as men to vote in freedom and security, to enter politics, run for office and serve their constituents, but as we know, this right is violated in many places across the world.

Most importantly, a change of mentality, I stressed, was needed so that violence against women would no longer be viewed as a "women's issue" or a private matter but as a human rights violation, which is what it really is.