



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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131st IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 12 - 16.10.2014

Governing Council
Item 10

CL/195/10(e)-R.1
30 September 2014

Reports on recent IPU specialized meetings

(e) Regional follow-up seminar on *The role of parliamentarians in the implementation of Universal Periodic Review recommendations*

Montevideo (Uruguay), 15 - 16 July 2014

The Seminar was jointly organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the General Assembly (Legislative Power) of Uruguay in collaboration with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). It was held in Montevideo on 15 and 16 July 2014. The Seminar is part of a series of regional events aimed at strengthening the contribution of parliaments to the work of the Human Rights Council. The main purpose of this event was to inform participants of how the recently established Universal Periodic Review (UPR) works and to sensitize them to the importance of being involved in this mechanism. Another objective was to identify good parliamentary practice in collaborating with the Council and promoting human rights in general, notably through the effective participation of other stakeholders, such as national human rights organizations and various civil society actors.

The IPU and the General Assembly of Uruguay co-organized a regional seminar for parliamentarians and parliamentary staff from Latin American parliaments on *Translating international human rights commitments into national realities: The role of parliaments and their contribution to the Universal Periodic Review of the United Nations Human Rights Council* on 15 and 16 July 2014.

This seminar was attended by 132 participants from 16 countries and was aimed at informing them of the functioning of the Human Rights Council and how they could contribute to its work as part of their efforts to promote the human rights of the citizens they represent.

Led by parliamentarians and human rights experts from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the debates were organized into six sessions namely: ending violence against women: from words to deeds; eliminating discrimination against, and the exclusion of, indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples; the role of parliaments in promoting and protecting human rights at national level; parliaments as part of a broader national human rights system; general information about the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism and opportunities for participation by parliaments and case studies on the participation of parliaments in the UPR.

Much of the discussion centred on concrete ways for parliaments to become more involved in the promotion of human rights and the work of the UN Human Rights Council, in particular its UPR.

Participants made several recommendations to enhance parliaments' contribution to the three stages of the UPR process, which concern the preparation of the national report, presentation of the report to the Human Rights Council and application of the Council's recommendations. The list of recommendations for action by parliaments includes the following:

- Help implement the resolution adopted by the Human Rights Council in June 2014 that parliaments should be invited to arrange for their formal representation in all of the bodies involved in the UPR process.
- Take part in the national consultation process and in the preparation of the national report, participating in the analysis of the State's challenges and achievements in the area of human rights and the identification of good practices in addressing specific problems from a human rights perspective; have the draft national report submitted to parliament for discussion before it is submitted to the Council as part of the UPR process.
- Participate in the interactive dialogue with members of the official delegation during the UPR Working Group's session in Geneva (Switzerland).
- Carry out stringent oversight to help ensure full implementation of the recommendations.
- Participate in the preparation of the mid-term report.
- Collaborate in activities to disseminate information on the good practices shared among other parliaments.
- Create space within each parliament to heighten awareness among new parliamentarians about human rights and the UPR mechanism.
- Design a legal framework for carrying out the country's human rights obligations.