



Inter-Parliamentary Union
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133rd IPU ASSEMBLY AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 17 – 21.10.2015

Panel discussion on *Powerful parliaments: building capacity for effective parliamentary oversight*

Jointly organized by IPU and the ASGP
14.30 - 16.30: Wednesday, 21 October 2015
Rooms 3 & 4, level 0, CICC

Concept Note

This is a joint meeting of the IPU and the Association of Secretaries General of Parliament (ASGP). The objective is to organize a dialogue between parliamentarians and Secretaries General that will identify ways to increase parliament's capacity to carry out parliamentary oversight effectively.

Effective oversight can result in improvements to government policy, political culture and the behaviour of members of government and public officials. It helps to legitimize government policy and may improve public perceptions of parliament as an institution working on behalf of the people.

"Effectiveness" is subject to a number of interrelated factors that make up an enabling environment in which oversight takes place. These factors include the formal rules that set out parliament's powers; access to information from government and ministers; parliamentary capacity to analyze that information; and the political will to use the powers and tools at the disposal of parliamentarians.

During this session, the focus will be placed on the institutional capacity of parliament. (A discussion on "political will" will take place at another session during the IPU Assembly on Tuesday 20 October at 09.30.) The discussion should draw out challenges, but also good practices and opportunities to enhance parliament's oversight role. In particular, participants will examine questions such as:

- What priority does parliament give to carrying out oversight? Has there been any change in recent years?
- What innovations have been introduced in the way oversight is carried out? What has been their impact?
- How satisfactory is parliament's access to governmental information needed to carry out oversight? What improvements would have the most significant benefit?
- To what extent is the parliamentary administration equipped to support parliamentary oversight, for example in terms of its capacity to carry out independent research or to do budgetary analysis?
- How does parliament evaluate the impact of its oversight activities? To what extent does parliament track the recommendations that it makes to the government, for example in committee reports, and the government's response to parliamentary recommendations?
- How does parliament involve the public in its oversight activities? How could parliament better inform citizens about its oversight role?

The session will contribute to the preparation of the second Global Parliamentary Report on "Parliament's power to hold government to account: Realities and perspectives", scheduled for publication in late 2016.

