

IPU E-BULLETIN

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UN Resolution to Strengthen Parliamentary Involvement on Peace, Human Rights, Democracy and Development - A new resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly (GA) has called for greater engagement between the UN, IPU and its membership of national parliaments on key global issues such as peace, democracy, human rights and development. The resolution “Interaction between the UN, national parliaments and the IPU” co-sponsored by 86 countries, builds on previous commitments between the UN and the parliamentary world to make global-decision making more transparent and accountable. Calling for a strategic partnership between the UN and IPU and a new cooperation agreement to reflect this, the resolution included the decision to more closely link the annual parliamentary hearing at the UN to major international processes. It invited more interaction between parliaments and the UN system at the country level on national development and called upon the UN to more systematically use IPU’s unique expertise when developing programmes for parliaments in countries emerging from conflict or in transition to democracy. The resolution urged IPU to continue mobilizing efforts on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and for parliaments to contribute to the shaping of the next generation of development goals post 2015.

“Every parliamentarian has experience and innovation to share, and each of us has a responsibility in bridging the divide between the UN and parliaments and between parliaments and civilians,” UN GA President Nassir Abdulaziz al-Nasser told UN members. In his address to the GA, IPU President Abdelwahad Radi said “We see the cooperation between the UN and IPU as a two-way relationship” that is mutually beneficial and reinforcing. “We still have a lot of work to do, but we feel we are on the right track to developing a parliamentary dimension to the work of the UN.” Several UN member states spoke to support the resolution including Morocco, Uruguay, Indonesia, Egypt, the United States, Mongolia, Mexico, India, Romania, Uganda, Russia, and Iran.

International Support for Myanmar Needed to Ensure Smooth Transition to Parliamentary Democracy – IPU is urging the international community to ensure it provides the necessary support to the country in its transition to parliamentary democracy after 50 years without a representative legislative body. It follows a 10-day IPU needs assessment to Myanmar earlier in May. It found that support in modernizing the parliament will require a consistent and coordinated approach by national authorities and international organizations. The IPU mission found that the Myanmar parliament was emerging as a driver of change in the country. It highlighted the large number of new legislation adopted on democratic and economic reform and amendments to many other laws on a range of issues in the short life of

the parliament. However, the mission found the young parliament was acutely aware of the fundamental challenges it faced to make it a modern and effective institution. This included little technical and institutional capacity to formulate policy and implement decisions.

For more details on the findings and recommendations of the IPU mission, please go to: <http://www.ipu.org/press-e/pressnote290512.htm>.

IPU Resolution Helps to Push Forward on Maternal and Child Health in East Africa –

A joint IPU-East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) regional seminar on how parliaments can help improve access to information on maternal and child health has marked the first step in pushing forward with a recent IPU resolution on the health of women and children. The resolution, adopted at the 126th IPU Assembly in Kampala in April, focused on what parliaments could do to help secure the health of women and children in a world where an estimated 7.6 million children died before reaching five years in 2010 and where hundreds of thousands of women die annually from childbirth or pregnancy complications.

Participants at the seminar in Arusha, Tanzania this weekend, included representatives from the parliaments of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, the EALA and the IPU. Particular focus was given to identifying ways to establish or improve systems for registering births, deaths and causes of death and to integrate the use of information and communication technologies in national health information systems and infrastructures. The seminar is expected to revive the efforts of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum of the EALA to address maternal and child issues. The region has very high maternal mortality rates, especially in Burundi where 970 out of 100,000 women died in childbirth in 2008 and where the quality and accessibility of data on health needs to be dramatically improved. An action plan on maternal and child health produced at the end of the seminar will be provided to the incoming parliament of the EALA in July.

Concrete Steps Underway to Tackle Violence Against Women in Burkina Faso – Efforts to make Burkina Faso only the second country in West Africa after Benin to legislate against all forms of violence against women and girls get underway next week. A two-day consultation organized by the Burkinabé parliament and IPU on 5-6 June with MPs, parliamentary staff, government ministries, law enforcers, civil society, women's and human rights groups will mark the first step in the drafting of a new bill on tackling violence against women in the country. The consultation will focus on different forms of violence, their causes, their prevalence and consequences as well as the challenges faced in addressing the issue. It will be followed by the creation of a committee including MPs, national and international experts including one from IPU as well as civil society, who will then draft the bill.

Women in Burkina Faso, one of the poorest countries in West Africa, suffer from widespread and multiple forms of violence. This includes the most common form, domestic violence, as well as rape, early and forced marriage. A 2008 study found one in five men regularly beat up his wife for contesting his authority in any way while another survey found that 71 per cent of women thought it acceptable that their husband beat them for going out without informing him, burning food, arguing with him or not taking care of the children. The problem is exacerbated by law enforcers who see violence, particularly domestic violence as a private and unimportant affair.

IPU's assistance to the Burkinabé parliament funded by Irish Aid follows similar support to Togo, where a draft bill has been tabled in parliament and is awaiting committee review. Support is also being given to Burundi on addressing gender-based violence.