IPU E-BULLETIN

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International Day of Democracy – Dialogue and Inclusiveness Key to Solving Today's Problems – With the conflict in Syria becoming ever more bloody and the events of the Arab Spring still very much in the public mind, IPU President Abdelwahad Radi is underlining the critical importance of political integration and dialogue to peace and democracy as the world marks International Day of Democracy (IDD) on 15th September. "People have not taken to the streets, and at times, taken up arms and paid with their life, to replace one form of dictatorship with another. What they are demanding and what has to be delivered is a system that brings everyone into the political fold…. That is as true everywhere else as it is in the Arab world," he says in a statement to IPU members ahead of the Day. "Clearly plurality of views can lead to confrontation…. But what separates democracy from other political philosophies is the principle and practice of solving differences first and foremost through dialogue."

A series of events across the world mainly hosted by national parliaments will celebrate the Day which has Dialogue and Inclusiveness as its theme. In Geneva, the IPU will participate in an Open Day at the UN's Palais des Nations, focusing on activities relating to parliaments and democracy. Parliaments, MPs and the public at large are being encouraged to participate in a Twitter event using #IDD2012 as the hash tag. For more resources and information on IDD 2012, please go to: http://www.ipu.org/dem-e/idd/overview.htm and follow @IPUparliament on Twitter. The full statement by President Radi can be accessed at: http://www.ipu.org/dem-e/idd/statement12.pdf

Pacific Parliaments Set Priorities for Community Engagement and Relations with IPU – Eleven parliaments from Pacific states have agreed on priority actions to better engage with their communities and constituents in a bid to strengthen democracy in their countries. At a gathering organized by the Samoan and Australian parliaments and the IPU in Apia earlier this month, representatives from the 11 parliaments, many of them Speakers, agreed on a set of 19 priority actions such as improving community consultation on parliamentary bills; becoming financially independent; establishing constituency offices and examining parliamentary sitting times to allow adequate time for MPs to return to their communities and to target outreach to less represented sections of the community. Examining the findings of the IPU-UNDP's Global Parliamentary Report on the changing face of political representation, participants also reflected on the challenges of having to combine their role as an MP with that of a traditional leader. The huge distances and remoteness of parliamentary constituencies in the Pacific states represent particular problems in fulfilling MPs' responsibilities.

The 11 parliaments also agreed to seek on-going engagement of IPU in the region through membership and regional IPU-supported activities. Distance and the lack of resources have usually hampered the involvement of the Pacific parliaments in the IPU.

IPU Mission to Albania and Montenegro to Assess Parliaments' Involvement in UN Interventions - An eight-member parliamentary delegation will be heading to Albania and Montenegro early September to look at the coherence and effectiveness of UN interventions in the two countries and the level at which parliaments and MPs are involved. The delegation, all members of the IPU's Committee on UN Affairs and the IPU's Director of External Relations, will meet key parliamentary and government officials,

representatives from the UN, World Bank, IMF and the EU as well as from civil society during a five-day assessment beginning on 10th September. The mission builds on from previous parliamentary missions to Tanzania, Vietnam, Sierra Leone and Ghana to assess the working of the One UN policy of aligning UN operations at country level to development priorities identified by national authorities. Reaffirming the significant advantages of pooling UN sources on the ground and of enhancing national ownership of development priorities, the missions have underscored the importance of the role and responsibility of national parliaments in implementing One UN. Further recommendations on how UN country teams can better engage with national parliaments will be made following this mission. To access previous mission reports, please go to: http://www.ipu.org./un-e/un-cmt.htm.

Tanzania Shares Parliament's Model Efforts to Tackle HIV/AIDS – MPs from the IPU's HIV/AIDS Advisory Group will draw lessons from the Tanzanian parliament on how parliaments can organize and work to tackle HIV/AIDS during a field visit to the East African country between 10-12 September. The mission, which follows similar ones to South Africa and Vietnam, will examine various issues including how structures in the Tanzanian parliament, including a standing committee dedicated to the issue, ensure coherence and coordination in the government's response to the disease; what is being done to meet internationally agreed targets and the shortcomings that exist at parliamentary level. The IPU HIV/AIDS Advisory Group, the global parliamentary focal point on the issue, had agreed that Tanzania, with its Standing Committee on HIV/AIDS Affairs and the Tanzania Parliamentarians AIDS Coalition, can serve as a model for parliamentary leadership and example for those parliaments wanting to strengthen their response to the epidemic in their country. To find out more about the IPU HIV/AIDS Advisory Group, please go to http://www.ipu.org/strct-e/comtees.htm#aids

Using Technology to Open Parliaments to the Public

Parliaments are facing a serious challenge in keeping up with the rapid evolution of e-technology as they strive to inform and engage their electorate, according to the World e-Parliament Report 2012. The report, to be presented at the 5th World e-Parliament Conference in Rome between 13-15 September, nevertheless finds that new technology offers parliaments, often grounded in the practices of the 19th century, opportunities to modernize. Many are making strategic use of technology in changing how they work, communicate externally and how they engage their citizens in the legislative process. The report cites the increase in webcasting plenary sessions (up to 52% of parliaments in 2012 from 43% in 2009) and in the use of Twitter (up to 29% from 12% in the same period) as how some technology is being used to involve citizens in their work.

The World e-Parliament Conference, organized by the UN and IPU and hosted this year by the Italian Chamber of Deputies, is the biennial platform for sharing information on the use of state-of-the-art technology in parliament. Political leaders will draw lessons learned from their efforts to open up parliament whilst technical experts will present the tools they are developing to put this political will into practice. IPU President Abdelwahad Radi will address the conference as it concludes on the International Day of Democracy on 15th September.

Details on and the webstreaming of the conference are available at: http://www.ictparliament.org/WePC2012