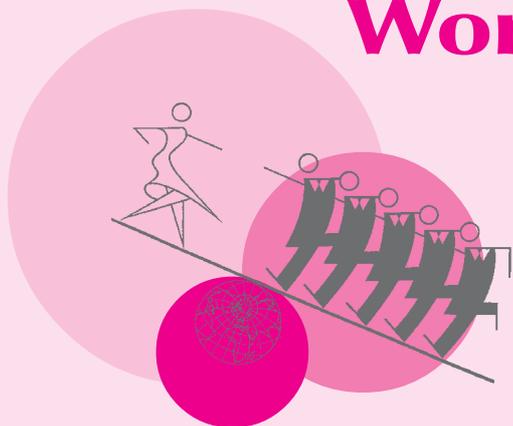


Women Elected in 2003

THE YEAR IN PERSPECTIVE



Some key points

- ▶ In January 2004, a new world record has been reached, with women comprising 15.2 % in both upper and lower houses. Only 14 countries have reached the 30% threshold, commonly considered necessary for women to have an impact on parliament.
- ▶ Women's greatest progress in 2003 was made in Rwanda, where they increased their representation by 23.1 percentage points. With 48.8%, Rwanda breaks the previous world record of Sweden.
- ▶ The greatest setback was suffered in Iceland, where women's representation dropped by almost 5 percentage points, to 30.2%. In the Pacific countries of Micronesia and Nauru, and in Kuwait, women continue to be absent from the national parliament.
- ▶ In a select number of countries, the proportion of women candidates elected is invariably smaller than that of men. Women under systems of proportional representation tend to fare better.
- ▶ In Rwanda, Belgium and Djibouti, where women made the most significant steps forward, special temporary measures had been implemented before the elections. Half of the countries holding elections in 2003 had some form of quota or reserved seat system.
- ▶ The decline in the number of women presiding officers (21, down from 25 in 2000) highlights the difficulties faced by women once elected to parliament.

A Global Perspective: January 2004

2004 begins with the highest world average ever reached

Encouragingly, women's presence in national parliaments around the world continues to increase. The latest statistics of the Inter-Parliamentary Union show that, on average, women account for 15.2% of parliamentarians in both lower and upper houses, the highest world average reached to date. This figure continues a trend of gradual but sustained growth for women over the past five years (Table 1).

Other striking developments include:

- A new world leader: in Rwanda women now comprise 48.8% of the lower House, a percentage never reached before by any parliament.
- Significant increases in upper houses: the world average increased from 10.7% in 2000, to 15.2% in 2004.
- Strong coverage of women in parliaments: of 181 countries with national parliaments, 171 (or 94.5%) have at least one woman in parliament.

Despite the continued progress, more work still needs to be done.

- Only 14 countries have reached the 30% threshold, considered by the IPU and the United Nations as a critical mass for women to have a significant impact on the work of the parliament.
- Women still only comprise 10% or less of the national legislature in 65 countries.

03

"The achievement of democracy presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of the affairs of society in which they work in equality and complementarity, drawing mutual enrichment from their differences."

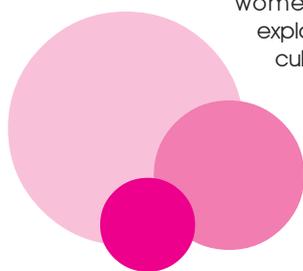
Article 4, Universal Declaration on Democracy, adopted by the IPU Council in 1997

The top 30: the prominence of Nordic and post-conflict countries

Two categories of countries feature prominently in the top 30 of the world ranking of women parliamentarians, these being Nordic and post-conflict countries. Each of the countries in the Nordic region have over 30% of women parliamentarians. Sweden heads its region with 45.3% of women and is n° 2 in the world ranking, followed by Denmark (38% - rank n°3), Finland (37.5% - rank n°4), Norway (36.4% - rank n°6) and Iceland (30.2% - rank n°13).

A number of post-conflict countries also appear in the top 30, several averaging between 25 to 30%. Most remarkable are Rwanda (48.8% - rank n°1), Mozambique (30% - rank n°14), South Africa (29.8% - rank n°15), Namibia (26.4% - rank n°20), Timor-Leste (26.1% - rank n°22), Uganda (24.7% - rank n°26) and Eritrea (22% - rank n°30).

Many of these post-conflict nations increased their percentage of women in the process of democratisation. Constitutional drafting processes, for example, led to the introduction of reserved seats in Rwanda, while in Mozambique and South Africa, political parties have instituted quota mechanisms. These mechanisms recognise the importance of including women in reconstruction processes, and in cementing women's participation in new democratic institutions. On the other hand, the continued success of Nordic women MPs has been systematically explained by reference to an entrenched culture of equality in these countries, which has seen the introduction of numerous equality measures including equal pay, government-funded childcare, and parenting rights for both men and women.



Changes in regional perspective: Sub-Saharan Africa moves ahead

Since 2000, most regions of the world have seen a rise in the percentage of women in their parliaments (Table 2).

The Nordic countries remain way ahead of all other regions, with a lead of almost 20 percentage points. Increases, however, have been slight, from 38.9% in 2000 to 39.7% in 2004. It seems that once reached, the 30% threshold is difficult to improve upon.

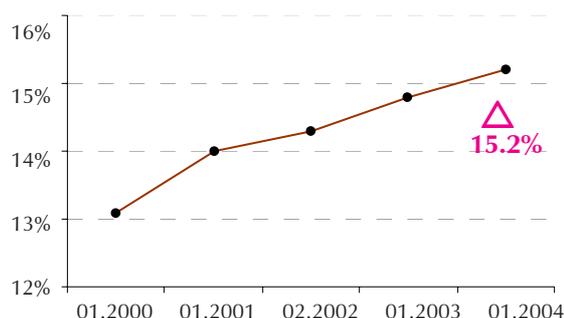
Last are the countries of the Arab world, with an average of 6.2% across both houses of parliament. Encouraging developments in 2003, however, confirmed a trend of progress for women in this region over the past two years.

In between these two extremes, countries in the Americas, Asia, Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa have tended to fluctuate between 15 and 18%. However, while the Americas, Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa have experienced steady increases in this period, Asian and Pacific countries have made no progress. But for the strong percentages of women in the parliaments of Australia and New Zealand, the regional average of the Pacific would be considerably lower. Of the 12 remaining countries in the region, 6 have no women in parliament, and 6 have between 0.9% and 6.2%.

Overall, the increase by 4 percentage points in the Sub-Saharan African region is most notable, with women now representing, on average, over 15% of parliamentarians. Conscious of the need to pursue progress in this field, some countries of this region (the SADC countries) have set a target of 30% by 2005. Hopefully, the positive trend experienced in Africa will be sustained.

Table 1: World average of women in parliaments, 2000-2004

► Situation in both Houses combined*



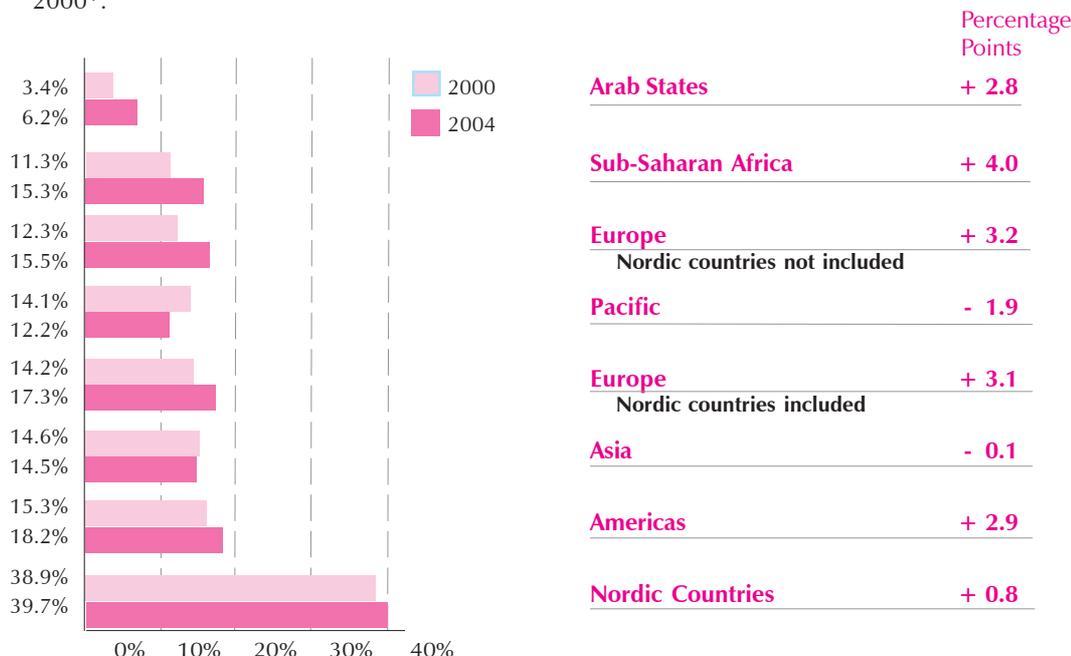
2000 2001 2002 2003 2004

Lower or single House	13.5%	14.1%	14.5%	14.9%	15.2%
Upper House or Senate	10.7%	13.4%	13.6%	14.0%	15.2%
Both Houses combined	13.1%	14.0%	14.3%	14.8%	15.2%

* The percentages do not take into account the case of parliaments for which no data was available at that date.

Table 2: Regional averages of women in Parliaments, 2000 and 2004

► Situation in January of each year for both Houses combined, by ascending order of the percentage in 2000*.



* The percentages do not take into account the case of parliaments for which data was not available.



Elections in 2003

Two steps forward, one step back

National elections held in 2003 evidenced small but nonetheless concrete advances of women in national parliaments. Of the 38 countries holding elections in 2003 for which data is available, 23 (or 61%) increased the proportion of women in their legislature. The margin of these increases varied considerably, from 0.5 percentage points in Finland, to 23.1 percentage points in Rwanda. Seven countries neither improved nor reduced the proportion of women in their parliaments, and a further seven suffered setbacks of between 0.2 (Japan) and 4.8 (Iceland) percentage points (Table 3).

In 2003, elections in Rwanda placed the country at the top of the IPU's world ranking of women in parliament, displacing the long-time champion, Sweden. These elections were the first in Rwanda since its divisive internal conflict in 1994. In premising the legitimacy of the new parliament on an equal participation of men and women, the drafters of the Rwandan Constitution (adopted in 2003) included a provision to reserve 24 of the 80 seats of the National Assembly for women. The Constitution also includes a quota of 30% for women in the Rwandan Senate. In addition to the reserved seats in the National Assembly, Rwandan electors voted for another 15 women. With a total of 48.8% of women, the newly elected National Assembly of Rwanda has come the closest to reaching parity of any national parliament.

Belgium made substantial gains of 12 percentage points in its 2003 elections. This increase is remarkable, given the difficulty faced by some developed countries in superseding their relatively high proportions of women. It is in line with Belgian government policy which has prioritised issues of equality in all areas, and can be attributed to the recent adoption of a quota law (described below).

Other notable gains of over five percentage points were made mainly in developing countries. Amongst these countries, Djibouti, Jordan, Mexico and Paraguay have introduced quota legislation in the past few years. Conversely, in developed countries, where women had previously comprised at least 10% of their legislatures, smaller gains were made, namely in Finland (+0.5 percentage points), Estonia (+1), Switzerland (+2.5), the Netherlands (+2.7) and Israel (+3.3).

In moving towards multi-party democracies, Cambodia and the Russian Federation have seen a decrease of women in the political sphere over the past ten years, countered to some extent by slight increases in the 2003 elections. In the case of the Russian Federation, the number of women MPs dropped from 14% in 1993 to 8% in 1999, rising again to 10% in 2003. Under the Soviet system, women's representation was frequently over 30%. While women have benefited from a formal equality with men for some time (women in Russia were granted the right to vote and to stand for election in 1918), politics in Russia are predominantly seen as "men's business". In 2001, the State Duma adopted a law on political parties encouraging them to

advance equal numbers of men and women candidates. Yet it appears that these laws may not always be applied, raising the issues of civic education amongst men and women, and the problem of entrenched political party practices and cultures. Much work is needed to change prevailing stereotypes.

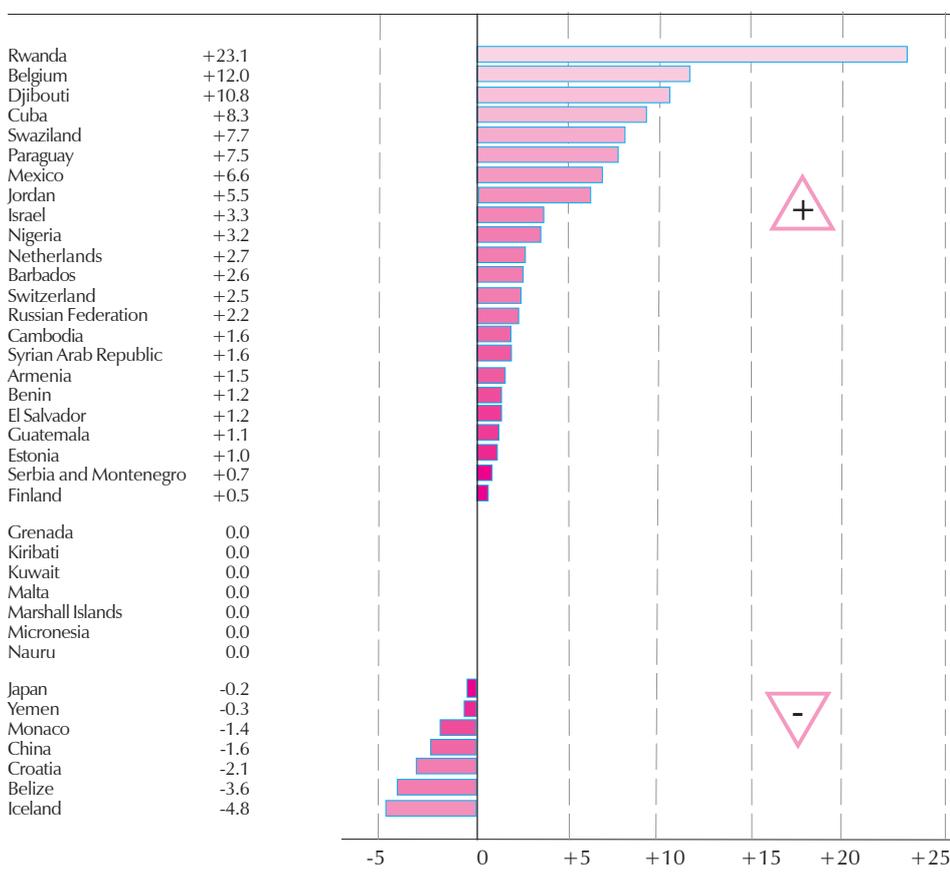
Surprisingly, the greatest loss in 2003 occurred in Iceland: the percentage of women MPs went down from 34.9% in 1999 to 30.2%. As part of the Nordic region, Iceland has long had mechanisms to ensure gender equality in all areas of social, political and economic life. Equal status between men and women is stipulated in the Icelandic Constitution, and a special equal-status law has been in effect since 1976. Governmental machinery exists, such as the Office for Gender Equality, the Equal Status Complaints Committee and the Icelandic Equal Status Council. Despite this disappointing setback, women continue to fare well in Iceland.

In three countries where no change was evident, women are not present at all in the national parliament, namely the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru and Kuwait. In the two Pacific countries, this may be attributed to more traditionalist cultures which do not encourage women's political participation, hence the difficulty in changing the status quo. In Kuwait, women do not enjoy the right to vote or stand for election. The 2003 elections were for men only. Various efforts have been made, however, to reverse this situation. The Kuwaiti parliament has twice refused to approve women's right to vote. Encouragingly, on the second attempt, the majority defeating the legislation decreased to just two votes. In 2003, the Prime Minister, Sheik Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, declared that women's political rights would be a priority for the newly-elected chamber. Many women showed their dissatisfaction with the status quo by taking part in mock elections organised in parallel with the official elections.

Table 3: Elections in 2003: where do women stand?

► **Progress and setbacks of women in the lower or single House of national parliaments holding general elections in 2003***

The figures reflect the difference (in percentage points) between the percentage of women in parliaments further to the 2003 elections and that of the previous legislature.



► **Women in parliaments after the 2003 elections**

% (Women MPs/Total MPs)

Rwanda	48.8%	(39/80)
Finland	37.5%	(75/200)
Netherlands	36.7%	(55/150)
Cuba	36.0%	(219/609)
Belgium	35.3%	(53/150)
Iceland	30.2%	(19/63)
Grenada	26.7%	(4/15)
Switzerland	25.0%	(50/200)
Mexico	22.6%	(113/500)
Monaco	20.8%	(5/24)
China	20.2%	(604/2985)
Estonia	18.8%	(19/101)
Croatia	17.8%	(27/152)
Israel	15.0%	(18/120)
Barbados	13.3%	(4/30)
Syrian Arab Republic	12.0%	(30/250)
Djibouti	10.8%	(7/65)
Swaziland	10.8%	(7/65)
El Salvador	10.7%	(9/84)
Paraguay	10.0%	(8/80)
Cambodia	9.8%	(12/123)
Russian Federation	9.8%	(44/450)
Malta	9.2%	(6/65)
Guatemala	8.2%	(13/158)
Serbia and Montenegro	7.9%	(10/126)
Benin	7.2%	(6/83)
Japan	7.1%	(34/480)
Nigeria	6.7%	(24/360)
Jordan	5.5%	(6/110)
Kiribati	4.8%	(2/42)
Armenia	4.6%	(6/131)
Belize	3.3%	(1/30)
Marshall Islands	3.0%	(1/33)
Yemen	0.3%	(1/301)
Kuwait	0.0%	(0/65)
Micronesia	0.0%	(0/14)
Nauru	0.0%	(0/18)

* Results of the 2003 elections in Democratic People's Republic of Korea are unavailable to date.

Table 4: Women candidates to 2003 elections

Statistics are only for those countries which provided data and for lower house elections in 2003.

	►CANDIDATES				►ELECTED CANDIDATES* (%)	
	Women	Men	Total	% Women	Women	Men
Mixed Electoral System						
Switzerland	993	1843	2836	35	5	8.1
Majority Electoral System						
Yemen	11	1378	1389	0.8	9	21.7
Jordan	54	711	765	7.1	11	14.6
Belize	5	63	68	7.35	20	46
Djibouti	14	116	130	10.8	50	50
Proportional Representation						
Croatia	1280	3839	5119	25	2.1	3.2
Paraguay	241	557	798	30.2	3	12.9
Benin	116	1046	1162	10	5	7.4
Iceland	329	447	776	42.4	5.7	9.8
Estonia	206	757	963	21.4	9	10.8
Finland	808	1221	2029	39.8	9.3	10.2
Rwanda	199	179	378	52.6	19.5	22.9
Malta	22	156	178	12.4	27	37
Netherlands	78	143	221	35.3	70.5	66.6

* Proportion of candidates elected to parliament.

Candidates standing for election in 2003

The number of women candidates gives an indication of the participation of women in elections and the general transparency and inclusiveness of the electoral process. Not being an exhaustive list of countries, the table of candidates (above) is merely indicative of the different trends across these specific countries.

In many of these countries, special measures exist to ensure that political parties advance a certain number of women candidates in the elections. In 2002, Belgium passed an electoral law stipulating that political parties are obliged to present an equal number of men and women on their electoral lists. This, in part, explains the 12 percentage point increase of women in Belgium. Another mechanism is that used in Croatia, where political parties are encouraged to present women candidates on their electoral lists with the promise of an increase in public funding of 10%.

Accepting that most candidates will not actually succeed, the percentage of women candidates elected is also noteworthy. This figure provides us with some indication of the societal, electoral acceptance of women as legitimate players in the political process. Seventy percent of women candidates in the Netherlands were elected. This is in fact higher than the percentage of men candidates elected.

This case is, however, an exception, rather than the rule. In most of the countries presented in the table, only 3 to 11% of women candidates were elected. Invariably, this was a little lower than the percentage of men candidates elected. The difference between men and women elected candidates is more extreme in Belize,

Benin, Malta and Paraguay than anywhere else. While women comprised just over 30% of candidates in Paraguay, only 3% won a seat in parliament. Four political parties have some kind of quota for women in Paraguay, but clearly, this was not sufficient to translate into seats.

Much can also be attributed to the type of electoral system used in each of these countries. Research has consistently showed that women stand a better chance of being elected under systems of proportional representation (PR). Among other reasons, this is because under PR more seats are contested in a single district.



Measures to improve women's participation in politics: are quotas the answer?

Of the 38 countries which had elections in 2003, 19 (50%) have some kind of mechanism to improve women's chances of being elected to parliament. As can be seen from previous examples, these can take the form of reserved seats in Parliament, electoral candidate quotas endorsed by political parties, or other affirmative action measures. While temporary special measures may remain a controversial issue, the results of the Rwandan elections in 2003 serve as a good example of their impact.

In Jordan and Djibouti, the introduction of quotas has marked a significant change in the approach towards women's participation in the political process. To some extent, these measures counter cultural and political barriers which have, to date, precluded women's participation in politics. By law, women in both Jordan and Djibouti have had the right to vote and stand for election for some time. Yet in Jordan, only one woman had ever been elected to the House of Representatives, while in Djibouti, no woman had ever made it to parliament. In both cases, it took strong political will and the adoption of specific mechanisms to trigger change.

In Jordan, King Abdallah announced the creation of six new parliamentary seats for women in the June 2003 elections. As a result, six women now comprise 5.4% of the new lower House. Women candidates received more than twice the votes received four years ago—33,452 compared to 13,128. In Djibouti, the electoral law was amended in 2002, requiring political parties to put women candidates forward. Not surprisingly, the newly introduced law resulted in 14 women candidates running for election, 7 of whom were elected.

Special measures may not be sufficient by themselves. In both countries, the general public benefited from sensitisation campaigns, organised by the government or NGO groups keen to promote the participation of women. Workshops were also organised for women running in the 2003 elections, covering a variety of issues, including campaign strategies and constituency representation.

Educating the public on the need for women in parliament and training of women candidates also occurred in the run up to the 2003 elections in Swaziland. In that country, Swazi voters elect 55 members of the 65 member parliament, the rest being appointed by the King. Of the 55 elected members, five were women. Two more women were appointed by the King. This result saw the proportion of women in the Swazi parliament increase by 7.7 percentage points, to a record 10.8%. NGOs held workshops to instruct women candidates on how to impress voters and how to run a successful campaign. In a country where women are legally minors, where they cannot own property, enter contracts or secure bank loans without the sponsorship of a male relative, this is certainly no small feat.

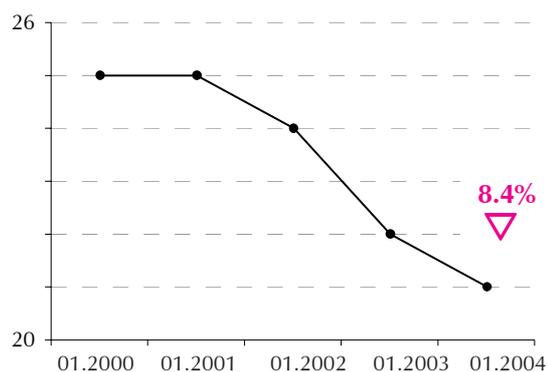
Positions of power: still a male domain

The number of women presiding over parliamentary chambers has declined since 2000, when 25 women presided over parliamentary chambers (Table 5). This year, the figure declined to 21 women (or 8.4%) holding such positions. Significantly, it is not always the same countries which elect women Presiding Officers. During 2003, women Presiding Officers were replaced by men in Finland, Belize, Bolivia and the Dominican Republic, while in the same year, women were elected to these positions in Estonia, Grenada, San Marino and the Netherlands.

Of the 21 chambers presided over by women, 14 belong to bicameral parliaments and 7 to unicameral parliaments. Amongst bicameral parliaments, it is only in Antigua and Barbuda and South Africa that women preside over both chambers. The very low percentage of women Presiding Officers evinces the difficulties faced by women once elected to parliament where a whole new set of challenges arise.

Table 5: Women presiding officers of parliaments

► Evolution over the past five years



► Situation as at 1 January 2004: 21 (8.4%)

Unicameral: 7 women Presiding Officers (6.2%)

Dominica; Estonia; Georgia; Hungary; Latvia; Republic of Moldova and San Marino.

Bicameral: 14 women Presiding Officers (10.3%)

(6 women in Lower Houses [8.8%]; 8 women in Upper Houses [11.8%])
 Antigua and Barbuda (House of Representatives and Senate); Bahamas (Senate); Belize (House of Representatives); Chile (Chamber of Deputies); Grenada (Senate); India (Council of States - Acting President); Jamaica (Senate); Lesotho (National Assembly); Netherlands (First Chamber of the States-General); South Africa (National Assembly and National Council of Provinces); Spain (Congress of Deputies) and Trinidad and Tobago (Senate).