



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

CL/206/SR
15 January 2021

Summary records of the Governing Council

206th session (Extraordinary virtual session)

1-3¹ November 2020

¹ While the Governing Council session was initially scheduled to take place from 1 to 4 November, it concluded its business earlier than foreseen on 3 November.

AGENDA

	<u>Page(s)</u>
1. Adoption of the agenda (CL/206/A.1)	3
2. Adoption of the Special Rules of Procedure for the virtual session of the Governing Council (CL/206/2-P.1)	4
3. Approval of the summary records of the 205th session of the Governing Council (Belgrade, October 2019) (CL/205/SR.1)	4
4. IPU Honorary President's report	9
5. Election of the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (CL/206/5-P.1, P.2, P.3 and P.4)	
(a) The candidates to the IPU Presidency will each be given 10 minutes to address the Governing Council, to present themselves and their vision for the Organization	4
(b) The Governing Council will elect a new President to replace Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron (Mexico), who will conclude her term of office on 19 October 2020	21
6. Financial results for 2019 (CL/206/6-R.1, R.2, R.3 and 6-P.1)	13
7. 2021 draft consolidated budget (CL/206/7-P.1)	17
8. Elections to the Executive Committee (CL/206/8-P.1 and P.2)	18
9. Brief report by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians	26
10. Brief report on the outcome of the virtual segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament (CL/206/10-P.1)	18
11. Future Inter-Parliamentary meetings (CL/206/11-P.1)	30
12. Questions relating to the IPU membership: the specific situation in Mali (CL/206/12-P.1)	31
13. Other business	32

First sitting

Sunday, 1 November 2020

The sitting was called to order at 13:05 CET on the Interprefy videoconferencing platform, with Mr. Chen Guomin (China), Vice-President of the Executive Committee and Acting President of the IPU, in the Chair.

The Secretary General said that 191 people, including 171 Governing Council members were logged in. The sitting therefore had quorum.

The Chair said that Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico) had completed her three-year term as President of the IPU. As Vice-President of the Executive Committee, he would act as President until a successor was elected.

The world was living through extraordinary times with COVID-19. Countries had confronted the disaster head on and would ultimately defeat the virus. Despite the pandemic, business continuity was of critical importance. Therefore, the Governing Council was meeting to take important decisions regarding the functioning and governance of the IPU. It was the first time that the IPU was holding a virtual session of the Governing Council.

All countries must join together in solidarity to defend universal values such as peace, development, justice, equality, good governance and cooperation. The world must keep moving forward. The worst problems were not without solutions. Parliamentarians should continue delivering tangible benefits to the people they represented.

The virtual session endeavoured to ensure that a global parliamentary voice was being heard in the current climate. The Secretary General had made great efforts to organize the session digitally. It was important to translate the proceedings into successful outcomes.

The Secretary General welcomed delegates to a historic session of the Governing Council which was taking place in exceptional circumstances.

The Executive Committee had held a number of meetings in preparation for the virtual session of the Governing Council. A convocation for the session had been dispatched to all Members of the IPU on 7 September 2020 together with the draft agenda, Special Rules of Procedure and other proposals. A total of 118 Member Parliaments and 321 Governing Council members had registered by the established deadline of 18 October 2020. As per the Special Rules of Procedure, the quorum for the virtual session was set at 162 members of the Governing Council. The Secretariat had continued to receive late registrations after the established deadline. Some late registrations had arisen due to force majeure while others were down to the fact that certain delegations had initiated but not completed the registration process as they awaited formal authorization from the Speaker of Parliament. Those scenarios were accommodated in line with the guiding principles of inclusivity and accessibility to all. By 28 October 2020, which, for technical reasons, was the absolute deadline to ensure access to the voting platform, the Secretariat had registered 144 Member Parliaments and 409 Governing Council members, of whom 406 were eligible to vote. The quorum, nevertheless, remained as specified in the Special Rules of Procedure, namely, 162 members of the Governing Council.

The virtual session of the Governing Council would be held using the Interprefy platform. It was a platform with which the IPU had some experience and which many United Nations agencies had been using. Interprefy had provided the necessary guarantees of security and accessibility to all. All members registered had received a personalized link to access the platform while other delegates could follow deliberations through a general streaming link.

Both the Executive Committee and the general membership had been regularly consulted regarding the above developments. All information was available on the IPU website.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (CL/206/A.1)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

**ADOPTION OF THE SPECIAL RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE VIRTUAL
SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**
(CL/206/2-P.1)

The Chair said that the Statutes and Rules of the IPU did not contain provisions to guide a virtual session of the Governing Council. Therefore, the Executive Committee had set up a working group to help formulate a set of Special Rules of Procedure. The rules would govern the present virtual session as well as possible future ones. The Working Group had examined all criteria and modalities at its sittings on 3 and 16 July 2020 and had subsequently offered guidance to the Secretariat. Based on that guidance, the Secretariat, in cooperation with a legal counsel, had prepared a first proposal of the Special Rules of Procedure. The proposal had been amended and endorsed by the Working Group on 13 August 2020 and then by the Executive Committee on 31 August 2020.

The Special Rules of Procedure, the proposed agenda as well as the deadlines for registration and submission of presidential candidatures had been submitted to Member Parliaments on 7 September 2020. The Executive Committee had specified that, unless one third or more of Members submitted an objection by 14 October 2020, the proposals would be considered adopted. By the said deadline, the IPU Secretariat had received formal objections from one Member Parliament only. At its sitting on 30 October 2020, the Executive Committee had concluded that there was overwhelming support for the Special Rules of Procedure. They could therefore be considered adopted.

The Special Rules of Procedure were adopted.

Item 3 of the agenda

**APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 205TH SESSION
OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL (BELGRADE, 2019)**
(CL/205/SR.1)

The summary records were approved.

Item 5 of the agenda

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION
(CL/206/5-P.1, P.2, P.3 and P.4)

The Chair said that the election of the next President of the IPU would be held in accordance with Article 19 of the Statutes of the IPU, the Rules of the Governing Council and the Special Rules of Procedure. By the stipulated deadline of 18 October 2020, four candidates had submitted a formal notification to the Secretary General stating their interest in running for the position of the IPU President. The notifications had been circulated to the entire membership as soon as they had been received. The four candidates were as follows: Mr. M. Sanjrani (Pakistan), Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan), and Ms. S. Attaullahjan (Canada).

At its sitting on 30 October 2020, the Executive Committee had decided to recommend two of its members from regions that did not have candidates to serve as tellers for the election. The main role of the tellers would be to ascertain the results of the election with the technical support of the independent auditor. The nominated Tellers were: Mr. J. Mudenda (Zimbabwe) and Mr. J.P. Letelier (Chile).

The teller nominations were approved.

The Secretary General said that the Executive Committee had decided that the election of the IPU President would be held remotely through an online electronic voting platform. The Executive Committee had also emphasized a number of non-negotiable criteria with which such an election should comply. Those included: the security of the ballot, the secrecy of the ballot, the reliability of the platform, auditability, trust in the system and accessibility. The Secretary General had then launched a call for the services of a company, entity or corporation that could organize the election while providing all the necessary guarantees. After examining all proposals extensively, Civica Election Services was selected. The company had been in business for more than 100 years with experience providing online voting services. Most recently, it had organized elections for some select committees within the UK Parliament.

The Special Rules of Procedure made provision for the electoral process to be audited independently. The Secretariat had carried out consultations and had ultimately decided to appoint the United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC) as the independent auditor. The UNICC would be assessing four pillars in particular: secrecy of the ballot, security, voter identification and authentication and oversight of the voting process.

Civica Election Services had provided the said electronic voting platform and had been carrying out technical exercises to test its feasibility. Notably, it had set up a test election which had taken place on 20 October 2020. The purpose of the test election was to give Governing Council members the chance to familiarize themselves with the voting process and check if they could access the platform. It also allowed the independent auditor to make his first assessment of the platform and identify any improvements. There had been a high turnout with voting by over 340 Governing Council members. Feedback from Governing Council members indicated that the system was clear, simple and user-friendly. There was also a positive appraisal from the independent auditor. The Secretariat had consistently reached out to members to encourage them to participate in the test election. It was not however possible for some due to conflicting commitments.

The Special Rules of Procedure also made provision for the presidential candidates to nominate representatives who would observe the electoral process. The purpose of doing so was to ensure trust and confidence in the integrity of the process. He confirmed that each candidate had indeed nominated a representative, each of whom had been familiarized with all the necessary information. The Tellers had also received the necessary documentation. The Secretary General was of the view that the conditions were in place for the election to take place smoothly in a transparent and trust-inspiring manner.

The election would unfold in a spirit of inclusiveness. The quorum had been set at 162 members of the Governing Council. A 24-hour voting window would open on 1 November 2020 at 15:00 Central European Time (CET) during which delegates would be able to cast their vote. An extended window had been provided to accommodate different time zones. A reminder would be sent at regular intervals to those who had not voted. As mentioned above, the primary method of voting was online using a secure voting platform provided by Civica Election Services. Voting could take place on any device that had internet access, such as a PC, tablet or smartphone. Each member of the Governing Council was entitled to one vote and would not be able to modify that vote once it was cast. There was also a secondary voting method, namely voting by SMS, to accommodate those without functioning internet facilities. Both methods were fully automated. The secrecy of the ballot would be protected as no human was involved. At 15:00 CET, all registered members would receive an email to their personal email address containing a link to the online voting platform. Once logged in, they would see a ballot paper with a list of candidates. Members would then be able to select and confirm their vote after which they would be logged out. They would then receive a confirmation by email or SMS stating that the vote had been recorded.

The first round of voting would end at 15:00 CET on 2 November 2020. The Tellers would then meet with the independent auditor, Civica Election Services and the Secretariat to ascertain the results of the first round. The representatives of the presidential candidates would also be present. The results of the first round would be announced on the same day at 17:00 CET. The IPU President was elected by an absolute majority of the votes cast. If the first round did not yield a winner by absolute majority, the top two candidates would go forward to a second round of voting. If a second round was required, it would begin at 18:00 CET on 2 November 2020. The second voting window would also last for 24 hours and would close on Tuesday, 3 November 2020 at 18:00 CET.

The Chair invited the independent auditor to present his technical report based on his analysis of the voting platform and the test election that had taken place on 20 October 2020.

Mr. F. Maggiore (United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC)), Independent Auditor, said that UNICC was a specialized agency of the United Nations providing ICT services and digital business solutions to UN organizations. It had been functioning for the past 50 years and supported around 50 partner organizations, including the IPU. The purpose of the independent audit was to provide assurances to the Governing Council that the four main pillars for the election were satisfied. Those were: secrecy of ballot, security of the voting platform, identification and authentication of voters, and overall oversight of the voting process.

First, UNICC had analyzed the documents and processes that had been followed to select the election service provider. The IPU had selected Civica Election Services which was also the choice of other organizations. Second, UNICC had interviewed key staff in the IPU Secretariat who had

organized the election. A session with Civica Election Services had also been held in which they had been asked questions around the security controls and mechanisms. Third, UNICC had monitored the execution of the test election on 20 October 2020.

The areas of investigation were as follows: (1) assurance of the service provider; (2) segregation of duties, confidentiality and integrity; (3) security of the Civica Election Services platform; (4) use of the authentication methods and factors; (5) regularity and outcome of technical security scans to assess potential weaknesses; (6) security awareness of Civica Election Services staff and operators; (7) integrity of the vote once the ballot had closed; (8) processes for voter registration and communication channels.

UNICC had found that the overall e-voting process had been very well received by the members of the Governing Council given the voting turnout for the test election of more than 80 per cent. It had also concluded that the IPU had a very well-documented process for onboarding and communication with Governing Council members. Based on the above analysis, there were reasonable assurances that the four pillars for the election had been met.

Mr. M. Khan Saif (Pakistan) wished to draw attention to a potential conflict of interest. The decisions of the Executive Committee could impact the outcome of the election. Therefore, any member wishing to stand for election should not be allowed to do so while also sitting on the Executive Committee. Only then could the election be transparent and impartial.

The Secretary General said that there were no rules on conflicts of interest in relation to the election of the IPU President. However, it made good sense that candidates for the presidency were not involved in decisions relating to the election. One of the candidates, namely Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan), was also a member of the Executive Committee. However, he had recused himself from the deliberations of the Executive Committee that had taken place on 30 October 2020 in order to prevent a conflict of interest.

The Chair confirmed that Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan) had recused himself from the last sitting of the Executive Committee.

The candidates for the presidency had participated in a hearing held virtually on 21 October 2020 in which they had each given a presentation and answered questions. The curricula vitae of the candidates, their vision, and responses to written questions had also been made available on the IPU website. In alphabetical order, he invited the candidates to present themselves before the Governing Council.

Ms. S. Atallahjan (Canada) said that the incoming IPU President must focus on issues that were important for all regions. She was passionate about the IPU because it worked with parliaments around the world to find collective solutions that worked for everyone.

She had a strong history of involvement in the IPU as part of the Canadian IPU group and in her work with multiple other regions within the Organization. As rapporteur for the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, she had taken the lead in drafting a resolution on the role of parliaments in assisting women and children's access to health services, working closely with colleagues in Uganda and India. At the 126th IPU Assembly, a landmark resolution had been unanimously adopted on *Access to health as a basic right: The role of parliaments in addressing key challenges to securing the health of women and children*. She had been the only parliamentarian to speak at the World Health Assembly in Geneva on the same topic in May 2011. She had also been the IPU goodwill ambassador for maternal and newborn child health, a member of the Bureau of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and a member of the Executive Committee where she had headed the first ever Sub-Committee on Finance.

Her ability to lead at the IPU was well-recognized. She had always found it easy to get along with her IPU colleagues and unite behind an idea. That was what she wished to see for the IPU. As President, she would be able to draw on her multicultural background having spent the first 30 years of her life in Asia before moving to North America. Her background gave her a good understanding of complex issues affecting different regions and an ability to bridge the gaps between them. She currently served as the President of the IPU Committee on Middle East Questions where she had successfully turned the platform into a place for constructive dialogue, including by establishing roundtables on water scarcity. Her experience mediating with Israel and Palestine, as well as with Yemen and Libya would help her to continue working for peace in the Middle East.

Her vision for the IPU presidency centred on four priorities: human rights and gender equity, climate action, access to education, and parliamentary diplomacy. Her first priority was to protect human rights, especially among vulnerable groups. All global citizens had a responsibility to stop hate, which often arose as a result of unchecked biases, prejudice and discrimination. She herself had defended human rights in her role as chair of the human rights committee in the Canadian Senate where she had led studies and tabled bills on issues such as cyber bullying and organ trafficking. Parliamentarians must also look to improve gender equity, first in parliament, and then in society as a whole. It was unacceptable that only 24 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide were women. Her second priority was to address increased climate shocks, such as droughts, flooding and cyclones. Mitigation strategies must be implemented in a timely manner. Her third priority was ensuring access to education for children and adolescents, especially for those who were disenfranchised. Not only would that require providing physical access to affordable schools but also addressing the factors that caused children to drop out of school, such as poverty. Her fourth priority was encouraging parliaments to engage in dialogue. The IPU should create a space for countries to work together, share experiences and ideas, and resolve crises collectively. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated the degree to which the world was interconnected. The fight must also go on for the rights of parliamentarians, many of whom faced harassment and threats. Overall, her vision was for a world where every voice counted and where parliaments were at the service of the people for peace and development.

The issues that were priorities for the IPU Members would be priorities for her. Those issues included gender equality, inclusion of young parliamentarians, technology, migration, sanctions and terrorism. As IPU President, she would represent the members and would look to them for advice and guidance. Many members had witnessed her commitment to the IPU first-hand. She had got to know them personally and had a deep respect for their friendship. She urged members to forget about political affiliations and vote for the betterment of the IPU and the global community as a whole. She believed that her experience and expertise set her apart from the other candidates.

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) thanked the outgoing IPU President, Ms. G. Cuevas Barron for her energy and dedication to the IPU during a difficult mandate.

According to the principle of rotation between the geopolitical groups, it was the turn of the Twelve Plus Group to stand for the election of the IPU President. The principle was essential to safeguard the rights of smaller groups in the IPU. His candidacy had emerged against that background.

He had embraced politics in the Parliament of Portugal 30 years ago and had been part of the Portuguese delegation to the IPU for 18 years. He knew very well how the Organization worked and shared common values with it, such as democracy, human rights and freedom. Throughout history, Portugal had brought cultures together and built bridges between peoples and nations in the same way that would be required of the IPU President. With leadership, dialogue and consensus-building, it would be possible to fight poverty, terrorism, migration, intolerance and climate change. He also hoped to increase women's participation in politics and decision-making positions, build the legislative and oversight capacities of parliaments, and give impetus to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Five years had passed since the United Nations had adopted the SDGs, but the world was currently facing new challenges in light of the pandemic. It was vital to change attitudes. The IPU must deepen its collaboration with the United Nations, gain more prominence and visibility in the international sphere, and be a voice for those who did not have one. However, the IPU must also look at its own internal processes. In particular, it must reinforce transparency, including in the implementation of its programmes and within the organization as a whole. The IPU must take action and not just approve resolutions.

There was a real desire among IPU Members to have a President who represented them. As President, he would do exactly that. He would remain the same person as he had always been, listening, working with and remaining close to all. He was certain that the Members trusted in his vision since he had received almost unanimous support over the past few weeks. He wished to involve the entire IPU in the implementation of that vision, including the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, the Standing Committees, the working groups and the geopolitical groups. Together, the IPU was stronger.

Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan) believed that his experience, expertise and passion would take the IPU to new heights. He had been serving in the Uzbek Parliament for the past 25 years and had initiated the adoption of a declaration on parliamentary diplomacy in Uzbekistan. He also had

experience working as a diplomat during missions to France, UNESCO and other organizations, giving him the necessary skills to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue and cooperation as the IPU President. As a lawyer and human rights activist, he had actively participated in the preparation of the UNESCO Declaration of the Principles on Tolerance, the UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, and the UN General Assembly resolution on enlightenment and religious tolerance. He had particular expertise in parliamentary law, international comparative law and human rights law.

His candidature was a historic one since there had never been an IPU President from the Eurasia Group. In contrast, the Twelve Plus Group had held the presidency 16 times while the Asia-Pacific, Arab, and African Groups, as well as the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean had each held it three times. He therefore counted on the support of members to make his bid successful.

He reiterated his commitment to the global ideals of democracy, human rights, equality, liberty, justice and the pursuit of happiness. Under the new slogan “United and renewed: IPU’s new strategy for all”, he wished to drive forward five visions for the IPU. First, it was necessary to strengthen the parliamentary dimension of the United Nations, notably by signing a global covenant to solidify a strategic partnership between the United Nations, national parliaments, and the IPU. Indeed, the covenant would help get the SDGs back on track by activating the very bloodline of the IPU: national parliaments. Second, the IPU and national parliaments should make preparations for the post-pandemic era guided by the motto “thinking globally – acting locally”. It would be particularly helpful to draw up recommendations and guidelines dealing with the fallout of the pandemic as well as to give special support to least developed countries and small island developing States. Third, the IPU should adopt a gender strategy aiming to empower women and girls. The priority would be to present women parliamentarians as role models to young girls. A global forum of women parliamentarians would be organized in Samarkand to adopt the gender strategy and encourage parliaments to adopt their own. Fourth, creating a youth strategy to engage young people in politics was also important. Indeed, people under 30 were severely underrepresented in parliament holding less than 2 per cent of the seats. Fifth, several other pressing issues would be addressed as follows: (a) strengthening inter-parliamentary coherence; (b) expanding cooperation with regional parliamentary organizations; (c) holding joint regional meetings, seminars and conferences; (d) increasing the number of seats in the IPU governing bodies. The IPU would thus increase its visibility on the global stage.

Mr. M. Sanjrani (Pakistan) said that he had started his career at the age of 21 as an advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan and at the age of 39 elected as the youngest Speaker of the Senate of Pakistan. His journey had allowed him to forge alliances and develop out-of-the-box solutions that allowed marginalized segments of society to realize their true potential.

The present sitting of the Governing Council had been convened during unprecedented times when humanity was facing multidimensional challenges. Those challenges had also provided the world with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change course. Countries should advance towards democratic values, the rule of law, gender equality and youth empowerment.

As the largest and most esteemed forum of world parliaments, the IPU could play a major role in steering the world out of crises and creating a more peaceful, prosperous and progressive planet. The Organization was the voice of the citizens of the world, especially the marginalized and vulnerable. It should develop a global perspective on existing challenges.

Under his presidency, he would make the IPU more inclusive, more multilateral, more vibrant, more dynamic, more progressive and more action-oriented. He would develop a charter of wellbeing for the masses to ensure universal education, health and safer livelihoods for youth, women and communities all over the world regardless of faith, caste or creed. He would formulate guidelines to deal with hazards and threats such as epidemics, including guidelines on how to provide emergency assistance, ensure necessities and offer compensation where necessary. He would develop a model for meaningful women’s empowerment so that women and girls could live their lives free from violence, enjoy freedom of choice and participate in decisions. He would enhance engagement between the IPU, the United Nations and international human rights organizations. He would engage youth in the democratic and political processes more than ever before. Lastly, he would arrange seminars and inter-faith dialogues between the IPU geopolitical groups to strengthen unity in diversity. Inclusivity would be a top priority for him.

Parliamentarians must be the drivers of change within the IPU. The IPU must become an effective voice for developed, emerging and developing nations. It must adopt an issues-based agenda that took into account the realities on the ground. It must not merely be a status quo organization representing a traditional “business as usual” outlook, but one that had a broad outlook on issues facing the people.

He represented youth and had experience in grassroots public service. His approach would be a fresh one since he was not part of the traditional political elite. He did not perpetuate a status quo approach but a mindset for change, with sensitivity to the concerns of youth, women, marginalized communities and less developed regions. He strongly believed that one who was new to the system could bring change and reform to the system.

It was time to provide a voice to the voiceless and empathize with all the people of the world. The IPU should not become a competitive forum, especially at such a difficult time, but encourage all stakeholders to work together in the interest of the organization and humanity as a whole.

The Secretary General said that the candidates on the ballot paper would be listed in the order in which they had presented their candidatures. The list would start with Mr. M. Sanjrani (Pakistan) followed by Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan) and, lastly, Ms. S. Attaulahjan (Canada). A technical hotline would be available around the clock to make sure any technical difficulties encountered by members of the Governing Council would be resolved quickly.

Item 4 of the agenda

IPU HONORARY PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Chair invited the Honorary President, Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico), to present her overall activities report for her three-year mandate. The [report](#) was testimony to her active, productive and fruitful presidency. Ms. Cuevas Barron was the youngest President in the history of the IPU. She had tirelessly defended strong, effective and representative parliaments that delivered to the people. She was a President of action that had delivered on her commitments and promises.

Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico), Honorary President of the IPU, expressed her gratitude to all the Members of the IPU without whom the results she had achieved as President would not have been possible. Parliamentarians could change the world if they just made the decision to do so.

Her time as President of the IPU had been an honour as well as a huge responsibility. Her report was an exercise in both transparency and accountability as well as a reminder of the importance of parliamentarism today. She had vowed to be a President that was actively and closely engaged with the Member Parliaments of the IPU. That commitment had taken her across many countries where she attended hundreds of events and listened to the voices of all stakeholders. In that way, the IPU had been a vibrant organization with inclusion, deliberation and democracy at its core.

The IPU, together with parliamentarians, must be at the forefront of global change. Her duties as President had only strengthened her faith in parliaments as institutions and in their ability to transform lives for the better. Global governance must have a parliamentary dimension at all times. Throughout her presidency, she had strived to create a more equal and sustainable planet. While current events posed an unprecedented challenge, it was also a once-in-a-generation opportunity to build back better, for instance, by fighting for gender quality, hearing young voices and promoting peace over conflict.

During her presidency, she had always aspired to translate international commitments into national and local realities. She believed that the IPU had great potential in that regard. In particular, the IPU could be a key player in the implementation of the SDGs given the important role that parliamentarians played in budget-related decisions. Therefore, significant efforts had been made to bring the IPU closer to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It had also been her wish to make the IPU a more inclusive organization with more voices being heard in decision making processes. As the youngest person and the second female to take up the IPU presidency, she had felt responsible for promoting the inclusion of women and young people in parliaments. Only equal parliaments could build an equal world.

The IPU had agreed on several important international documents during her term, including the UN General Assembly resolution on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU, and the Declaration of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. The IPU was political and parliamentary in nature, therefore all of its documents, even its working documents, must reflect that accordingly.

It was also a priority to ensure efficiency in the use of the budget. To that effect, she had requested a modification of the rules related to the budget of the presidency which had, in turn, led to savings.

Above all, she had wanted to innovate during her presidency so that the IPU could confront the challenges of the twenty-first century. Against that background, she had set up the Speakers' Dialogue and the Executive Education Parliamentary Leadership seminar. She had launched the IPU 130th anniversary book, included more workshops at IPU Assemblies, and advanced new subjects in IPU-UN resolutions, such as gender and youth. Other innovations included ensuring that the IPU was present at the UN Conference on Trade and Development, democratizing certain aspects of the Organization such as the Preparatory Committee for the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, and introducing an agenda to increase transparency and accountability. Lastly, she had brought in gender parity criteria when forming new working groups and made the Advisory Group on Health truly representative in geopolitical and gender terms.

During her presidency, she had also taken part in other initiatives relevant to the IPU agenda. They included the following: the Champions Network for the UN Food Systems Summit 2021, the UHC Movement Political Advisory Panel 2030, the High-Level Steering Group for Every Woman Every Child and an action group for the 9th World Water Forum.

Overall, she had attended 29 working meetings with Heads of State, over 30 UN high-level events, about 20 parliamentary conferences, more than 90 bilateral meetings with Speakers of parliament and thousands of meetings with parliamentarians. She had also presided over 20 meetings of the Executive Committee and visited 48 countries. The IPU was a beautiful platform for parliamentary diplomacy. The real value of the Organization was its ability to harness plurality for a more peaceful, sustainable, inclusive and gender-sensitive planet. The parliamentary community must come together as one single heart to effect change.

She paid tribute to all the parliamentarians who had contributed to the IPU throughout its 131-year history and thanked all those who had helped make her own vision a reality. She thanked her two Vice-Presidents, Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation) and Mr. Chen Guomin (China), all the members of the Executive Committee, the Chairs of the geopolitical groups, parliamentarians of all nationalities as well as the IPU Secretariat. The IPU must have the ambition, dream and passion to effect change on the planet. Today's generation must be the one to end violence against women and girls, eradicate climate change, find a solution to the pandemic, and eliminate hunger and poverty.

Ms. S. Kihika (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for everything she had done for the IPU. She had passionately defended the IPU in the world, championed gender equality and fought for parliamentarians within the IPU itself. Ms. Cuevas Barron was also a big believer in creating a peaceful world and promoting parliamentary diplomacy.

Mr. V. Sotto III (Philippines), speaking via video message on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, expressed his gratitude to Ms. Cuevas Barron for her exemplary leadership. She had taken great efforts to make the IPU more inclusive and democratic, promoting greater participation among women, youth and parliamentarians from different geopolitical groups. In addition, Ms. Cuevas Barron had put the IPU at the forefront of global cooperation, forging a closer partnership with the United Nations and fostering greater multilateralism. Thanks to her efforts, the IPU had remained relevant despite the pandemic.

Mr. O. Alnuaimi (United Arab Emirates), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for the fantastic work she had done as President of the IPU, particularly her efforts to promote democracy and sustainable development.

It was important to reinforce the work of the IPU and work together to tackle global challenges, such as terrorism, unemployment, hunger and violence. It was only through solidarity that the world could defeat the pandemic and achieve peace and stability.

Mr. B. Llano (Paraguay), speaking by video message on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean, thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for her commitment, dedication and service to the IPU. He was proud of all that she had achieved internationally as President of the IPU. She had accomplished all her goals and strengthened the IPU greatly.

Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Turkey) thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for her service to the IPU. She had been very welcoming, transparent and open-minded, showing good leadership in difficult times.

Mr. M. Bouva (Suriname), speaking on behalf of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, said that Ms. Cuevas Barron had led the IPU as a young, vibrant, dynamic and enthusiastic woman. He was particularly grateful for the support she had provided to youth empowerment during her presidency and looked forward to building on what they had achieved together.

Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation), speaking on behalf of the Eurasia Group, said that Ms. Cuevas Barron had done a great deal in a short space of time. Although COVID-19 had disrupted her presidency, it had also made it unique, forcing her to look for new approaches and solutions. As the youngest President of the IPU and the second female President, she had taken on a huge responsibility and lived up to it. Examples of her achievements included fostering closer cooperation with the United Nations, helping establish the international day of parliamentarism, ensuring more inclusive and democratic leadership and organizing celebrations for the 130th anniversary of the IPU. In addition, she had always acted on the requests of the Eurasia Group. It had been an honour to serve next to her as Vice-President of the Executive Committee.

Mr. J. Mudenda (Zimbabwe), Vice-President of the Executive Committee, took the Chair.²

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) said that Ms. Cuevas Barron had demonstrated her full dedication to the IPU, for instance, through her many trips from one country to another. It would not be easy to fill her shoes. The next President could learn a great deal from her.

Ms. D. Solórzano (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that Venezuela would be eternally grateful to Ms. Cuevas Barron for her historic commitment to democracy, freedom and human rights. She had understood clearly that democracy was not possible without parliaments and had always spoken up at the right moment in defence of those who needed it.

Mr. M. Ali Houmed (Djibouti) said that it had been an honour and a pleasure to work with Ms. Cuevas Barron. Under her leadership, the IPU had gained a great deal of clout in the world which had, in turn, given parliaments the strength to continue persevering. He thanked her on behalf of the African Parliamentary Union over which he presided.

Ms. A. Gerken (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group, thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for all of her work. She was a very goal-oriented and passionate person who had made an impact on the world during her presidency. She had been an example for women and young parliamentarians.

It was also important to thank the Secretariat for leading parliaments through the pandemic as well as Mr. Pacheco for his work as the Chair of the Twelve Plus Group.

Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia) thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for the excellent service she provided to the IPU as an institution and to its Member Parliaments. He was delighted about the partnerships she had developed during her presidency and would continue interacting with her. He also thanked the Secretariat for an excellent job done during such a difficult period.

Ms. O. Aymadji (Chad) said that, despite COVID-19, Ms. Cuevas Barron had done everything in her power to ensure that the IPU could continue its work. Having a female President of the IPU was a great symbol for all women but especially for young girls. Ms. Cuevas Barron should continue working so that more and more women could follow the path that she had blazed.

Ms. T. Modise (South Africa) said that she had been highly impressed by Ms. Cuevas Barron. It had been high time for a young person to take the reins, particularly a young woman from a region that was often ignored. South Africa had never had so many visits from an IPU President. Many African women had felt at one with her given she came from a region with similar economic and political challenges. Ms. Cuevas Barron would be missed at many IPU fora, including the P20 and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians. It was vital that she carried on fighting.

Ms. C. Roth (Germany) thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for a presidency that was dedicated to all. She was a strong woman taking on all global challenges, including women's empowerment, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Ms. Cuevas Barron had demonstrated real friendship as well as a personal capacity to cross borders where others were building walls.

² Shortly before the end of the sitting on the first day, a technical incident led to the temporary disconnection of the Chair's line and so Mr. J. Mudenda (Zimbabwe) as the senior Vice-President stepped in while the problem was being fixed.

Mr. A. Fulata (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, congratulated Ms. Cuevas Barron on a wonderful term as President. The next President must mainstream the challenges of Africa and other developing countries in the work of the IPU. Those included security, socioeconomic and humanitarian challenges.

Ms. M. Oliveira Valente (Angola) thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for being an example for young people and women.

The representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran expressed his gratitude to the IPU for organizing the sitting despite difficulties. He thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for her valuable efforts as President. The next President should open up new avenues for parliamentary diplomacy with a view to overcoming challenges and building on previous activities.

The representative of Sao Tome and Principe congratulated Ms. Cuevas Barron for the excellent work she had done over the past three years despite difficulties. It was impressive that she had visited so many countries but unfortunate that Sao Tome and Principe had not been on her list. The next President should start by visiting small countries to better understand their realities.

Mr. K. Lusaka (Kenya) said that Ms. Cuevas Barron had brought a great deal of youthful energy to the IPU. Other young people would see her as a symbol to be emulated. She had always kept her eyes on the ball and was always determined to achieve. He looked forward to working with her again in the future.

Ms. M. Baba Moussa (Benin) thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for her work, particularly in raising the profile of women. The next President must include African challenges in the programme of the IPU.

Mr. M. Nadir (Guyana) congratulated Ms. Cuevas Barron on her sterling performance. Guyana would continue to be an active member of the IPU under the new President.

The Secretary General invited members who had been unable to take the floor due to technical issues to send in written testimonies which would then be passed on to Ms. Cuevas Barron.

In their remarks, members had drawn attention to the many qualities and achievements of Ms. Cuevas Barron. In particular, they had praised her dedication, vibrancy, dynamism and commitment to the foundational values of the IPU, such as human rights and gender equality. She was a true believer in parliamentary diplomacy and had achieved a great deal in that regard. The IPU Presidency was not usually a full-time job but, through her activeness, she had shown that it could be.

On behalf of the Secretariat, he thanked Ms. Cuevas Barron for her contribution to the IPU. She had enhanced the image of the Organization and pushed it to attain greater results. The Secretariat had been honoured to assist her and pledged to work with the incoming President to build on her achievements. He wished Ms. Cuevas Barron success in all future endeavours and emphasized that the House of Parliaments would always be open to her.

Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico) expressed gratitude to all of her colleagues. Her presidency had been an intense one and at times she had been pushy. However, as a parliamentarian, her objective had always been to fulfil her mandate and remain accountable to those who had elected her. Being President of the IPU was a huge honour and responsibility. The platform had allowed her to engage in dialogue at the highest level as well as to bring the Organization back to its roots by putting people at the centre of decisions.

COVID-19 was not only about health but also about inequality, economic growth, jobs, violence against women, climate change and children. The world was facing many challenges, but parliamentarians were fully capable of finding solutions to those challenges.

Once again, she thanked members for their trust, commitment and daily efforts to create a better world. Her presidency had come to an end, but she would continue participating in other capacities.

The sitting rose at 16:30 CET.

Second sitting

Monday, 2 November

The sitting was called to order at 14:40 CET on the Interprefy videoconferencing platform, with Mr. Chen Guomin (China), Vice-President of the Executive Committee and Acting President of the IPU, in the Chair.

The Chair said that several members had experienced technical problems at the previous sitting, including poor sound and video quality and even disconnection. He and the Secretary General had held a video call after the sitting to discuss the matter. Interprefy had understood the problem and was working hard to make sure the situation did not repeat itself, including by sending a technician to Geneva. Having been disconnected himself, he thanked Mr. J. Mudenda (Zimbabwe) for chairing the meeting in his absence. He had lost the opportunity to express his appreciation to the Honorary President and would therefore submit his remarks now. Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico) had always asked herself how history would remember the present generation. As IPU President, she had shown that the present generation could be the one to achieve gender equality, open the door to politics for young people, redefine human solidarity, strengthen multilateralism, end poverty, eradicate hate speech, and generally make a difference. It was safe to say that, under her leadership, the IPU had made a difference.

Item 6 of the agenda

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2019 (CL/206/6-R.1, R.2, R.3 and 6-P.1)

Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden), Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, was pleased to report on the audit of the IPU financial statements for the year 2019.

In April 2020, the external auditor, Mr. D. Monnot (Swiss Federal Audit Office) had presented his findings for the financial year 2019. He had confirmed that the financial statements of the IPU were compliant with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). He had given an unqualified audit opinion, reporting that the quality of the financial statements was high. He had confirmed that the IPU was in sound financial health and had no new audit recommendations to make. No problems had arisen during his work. Overall, it was a positive audit exercise which had taken place under very good conditions.

The Swiss Federal Audit Office had agreed to carry out another, separate audit of the IPU grant from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The audit had been successfully completed with no audit recommendations made. SIDA had approved the audit believing it to be clear and executed with accountability.

It was the final time, after seven years, that the Swiss Federal Audit Office would be auditing the accounts of the IPU. She therefore thanked them for the quality of their work and the excellent support they had provided to the IPU.

Both the Sub-Committee on Finance and the Executive Committee had endorsed the audit results and financial statements. They supported the efforts of the IPU Secretary General and his team to ensure good results with careful spending. The internal auditor, Mr. R. del Picchia (France), had also been happy to accept the findings after receiving clarification on a few points of detail.

Therefore, the Sub-Committee on Finance and the Executive Committee recommended that the Governing Council approve the financial administration and the financial results of the IPU for the year 2019.

Mr. R. del Picchia (France), Internal Auditor, speaking via video message, said that he had attended a virtual meeting on 2 April 2020 during which the external auditor had confirmed that the IPU financial accounts for 2019 were of a high quality. It was clear that the IPU had managed its accounts well and was in a healthy financial situation. Similarly, the 2019 budget had been executed in conformity with the guidance set out by the Sub-Committee on Finance. Member contributions had remained the same as in 2018, although an increase of CHF 11,450 had been recorded given that some additional countries had joined the organization. A total of CHF 3 million in voluntary contributions had been received and spent, a figure that was similar to 2018. Voluntary contributions meant that the IPU could fund programmes without having to resort to statutory contributions.

Nevertheless, the IPU should not rely too much on voluntary contributions as it could threaten the independence of the Organization. Lastly, the Sub-Committee on Finance had authorized the use of CHF 100,000 from the Working Capital Fund to balance the accounts if needed, but it had not been necessary to use those funds in the end. He congratulated the Secretary General on an efficient savings policy and recommended that the Governing Council approve the IPU financial accounts for 2019.

The Chair said that both the internal and external auditors had given the IPU a clean bill of financial health for 2019. He encouraged the Secretariat to continue to make the IPU accounts transparent and accessible as well as to ensure efficient management of resources. The audited financial statements would be posted on the IPU website and would be accessible to all. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the IPU financial statements as well as the financial administration of the IPU by the Secretary General for the year 2019.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General thanked the members for their confidence and feedback. He would continue to do his level best to ensure the accounts were properly managed. It was his responsibility to make sure that the accounts were transparent and accessible and that expenditure was consonant with the budget as decided by the membership.

He presented the financial situation of the IPU as at 30 June 2020. Overall, there were no red flags to report despite the extraordinary circumstances brought about by the pandemic. The Secretariat was managing to keep the finances of the Organization on track. Similarly, Members were continuing to meet their financial obligations with assessed contributions paid at similar levels to previous years. He was grateful to the Members for making an effort to pay even in such difficult times.

Income was divided into assessed contributions, voluntary funding and other accounts received. Assessed contributions amounting to CHF 10.9 million had been fully invoiced to Members at the beginning of the year. There had been no suspensions of membership rights. Internal assessment on staff salaries was on target at 95 per cent of the budget. The Secretary General had also budgeted CHF 5 million in voluntary funding of which an opening balance of CHF 3.1 million had been available at the beginning of the year. A further CHF 0.2 million had been received as the year went on with more voluntary funds expected by the end of year. The annual interest received on investment accounts would be recorded at the close of the year. The Secretariat anticipated that investment and other revenues would be slightly below budgeted levels as a result of volatile markets brought about by the crisis.

There had been some variations in expenditure as a result of the crisis. For example, the cancellation of the Assembly in April 2020 had led to significant reductions in travel, personnel and meeting costs. At the same time, unexpected expenditure had been incurred for remote working facilities and virtual meetings. In that context, the budget line aimed at achieving universal membership and enhancing Member relations was running at 63 per cent for the first half of 2020. Expenditure to enhance IPU visibility was within budget by 11 per cent with additional expenditure planned for the coming quarter. Expenditure for improved management, governance and internal oversight was at 80 per cent of the mid-year budget due to reduced travel costs and no extra Executive Committee meetings. The budget for programmatic work accounted for 26 per cent of the total core budget with expenditure standing at 88 per cent for the first half of the year. The latter figure was expected to increase by the end of the year but would remain below target due to savings made on travel and meeting costs. Programme expenditure under voluntary funding had reached CHF 1.3 million by 30 June 2020. The figure was expected to be lower than planned by end of year, again, due to reduced travel and meeting costs with some expenditure also being deferred. Expenditure for support services was within budget, accounting for 90 per cent of the budgeted level, and was expected to be close to target by the end of the year.

As at 31 October 2020, the IPU had received CHF 9.6 million of assessed contributions for the current year which amounted to 87 per cent of the total amount due. The outstanding balance stood at CHF 1.4 million. Further payments of CHF 0.2 million had been received against prior years' assessed contributions. The outstanding balance for prior years' contributions stood at CHF 0.9 million, including the special debts owed by Comoros and Mauritania.

As at 31 October 2020, the total amount of contributions in arrears was CHF 2.3 million. Three Members (Comoros, the Dominican Republic and Venezuela) were in arrears for three full years and were therefore liable for suspension of membership rights under Article 5.3 of the IPU Statutes. Ten

Members (Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Mali, Saint Lucia, South Sudan, Sudan and Vanuatu) and three Associate Members (Andean Parliament, Inter-Parliamentary Committee of the West African Economic and Monetary Union, and Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States) were in two full years of arrears so were liable to have their Assembly delegate attendance restricted. Members could also be deprived of voting rights under Article 5.2 of the Statutes. There were 56 other Members and Associate Members accounting for the balance of arrears totalling CHF 1.1 million. The net position of the allowance for uncollectable accounts was CHF 321,000. The budgeted allowance should be sufficient to cover any write-offs during the year.

The IPU also had other accounts receivable in the amount of CHF 53,000 which included reimbursable withholding taxes, technical assistance projects, mission travel, and advances.

The Working Capital Fund, which was the IPU safety net, had a gross balance of CHF 9.3 million as at 31 October 2020.

The IPU had balances of cash and deposits of CHF 13.8 million as at 30 June 2020. A total of 96 per cent of cash and deposits were held in Swiss francs, 2 per cent in US dollars and 2 per cent in euros. UN rates for Swiss francs currently stood at 0.91 per US dollar and 1.078 per euro.

With regard to capital expenditure, the IPU had invested CHF 57,000 in new computer equipment in response to the pandemic. The equipment had allowed the Secretariat to work remotely and manage virtual meetings. In addition, a total of CHF 39,300 had been spent on the development of the IPU website and open data platform.

Lastly, the IPU was a member of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund under which it had an obligation to pay annual contributions together with its share of any actuarial deficiency payment. The IPU also had a Legacy Pension Fund which covered former employees of the organization. The latter Fund was in good stead as at 30 June 2020 with assets of CHF 3.8 million to meet pension commitments for 10 former employees and pay the residual benefits of four current employees. The performance of the fund on the investment market was below target with a return on investment standing at one per cent. However, the markets were improving and there was hope that by the end of the year the situation would have improved further. A full actuarial study of the Fund would be carried out at the close of 2020 in conformity with IPSA standards.

Next, the Secretary General wished to draw attention to the situation of voluntary funding. The Secretariat was striving to mobilize additional voluntary funding while ensuring it did not become unduly dependent on external sources. The IPU had maintained the same level of voluntary funding in the 2021 budget, namely one quarter of the total budget.

There were various categories of voluntary funding. The first category was institutional funding under which SIDA had donated CHF 1.5 million to support the IPU across its Strategic Objectives. The IPU was also in negotiations with the Shura Council of Qatar with a view to obtaining support for the same purpose.

A second category of voluntary funding was programme funding under which the IPU was working with a series of development agencies. For example, Irish Aid was supporting the IPU's gender equality programme. Similarly, negotiations were ongoing with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with a view to renewing funding for gender work. The United Arab Emirates had also expressed interest in supporting the IPU's gender programme. Other donors included the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) which was expected to renew its funding arrangements for jointly agreed activities. In 2016, Angola had also provided funds (CHF 200,000) for activities in the area of maternal, newborn and child health. China had pledged an additional US\$ 1.5 million dollars to build the capacities of parliaments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Equatorial Guinea had pledged CHF 400,000 although the sum had yet to be paid up. Micronesia had already made US\$ 100,000 available for migration and refugee work and had come forth with a new pledge of US\$ 130,000. The European Union had provided EUR 260,000 to support ongoing work in Djibouti aimed at strengthening capacities in the area of human rights and an extension agreement was under discussion. The United Arab Emirates was also considering the possibility of providing support to the IPU's peace and security programme.

A third category of voluntary funding was funding from within the UN system. The United Nations Development Programme was a long-standing partner that had supported capacity building activities for parliaments and was currently working with the IPU in Myanmar. Furthermore, the IPU had an agreement with the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) to implement UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) on preventing access to weapons of mass destruction by non-State actors. It was also concluding an agreement with UN Women in support of gender equality programmes in Turkey. The previous year, a five-year programme had been launched by the IPU, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the United Nations Office of

Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) with a view to combatting terrorism and violent extremism, as part of which UNOCT had made available CHF 2.2 million. Several Members had also provided support for the programme, including China (US\$ 1 million), Bangladesh (US\$ 200,000), and Benin (EUR 15,000).

A fourth category of voluntary funding was support from other partnerships, including support in-kind. The National Assembly of the Republic of Korea was continuing to second staff to the IPU with a view to boosting research capacity. In addition, the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva had agreed to grant the IPU access to policy-oriented research and send its best students to work for the IPU. Lastly, there were a number of foundations that were supporting the IPU in its work. For example, the Blue Planet Foundation was providing support on climate change and the Julie Ann Wrigley Foundation was working with the IPU on gender equality.

The Chair commended the Secretary General for an encouraging and informative report. He should continue expanding voluntary funding as the IPU was much needed on many fronts.

Speaking on behalf of the representative of Thailand who had submitted a question in the event chat, the Chair asked whether it was necessary to be concerned about the unpaid contributions.

The Secretary General said that there was no cause for alarm at that stage as the level of unpaid contributions for 2020 was comparable to previous years. There were many reasons why Members were late in paying. Some were planning to pay at the end of the year rather than at the beginning. Nevertheless, he urged the Chairs of the geopolitical groups to encourage their members to pay. He would raise the alarm should the situation continue unabated.

Ms. L. Cai (China) said that the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 had dealt an unprecedented blow to the global economy as well as to social development. Yet, most Members had still paid their contributions on time. It showed how much they valued and supported the IPU. Not only had China paid its contributions on time, it had also provided an additional donation of US\$ 2.5 million for capacity building and counter terrorism programmes with a further US\$ 1.5 million pledged for the future. The IPU must use those funds carefully and wisely to bring maximum benefit for all countries. It should also play a more active role in safeguarding multilateralism, deepening cooperation over COVID-19, restoring the world economy and advancing global governance.

The Chair, speaking on behalf of Mr. J. Fakhro (Bahrain) who had posed a question in the event chat, asked whether the IPU expected to save on administration costs through the use of technology.

The Secretary General said that the IPU had indeed made a great deal of savings by going virtual and working remotely. In addition, the IPU was saving on paper consumption and cutting back on its carbon footprint. The Secretariat was keen to factor in the lessons learnt during the pandemic and be more cost-efficient in the future. It would continue giving pride of place to new technologies wherever feasible.

The Chair said that it was necessary to appoint a new internal auditor for the coming years. He had received a nomination from Gabon.

The nomination was approved.

The Chair said that the Executive Committee had elected the Supreme Audit Institution of India to be external auditor of the IPU accounts for the period 2020-2022.

Speaking on behalf of the representative of Nicaragua who had posed a question in the event chat, the Chair asked the Secretariat to clarify its strategy for recovering amounts owed by Members.

The Secretary General said that he reached out to those Members on a regular basis and reminded them of their obligations. In doing so, he pointed out the amounts owed and the penalties for which they were liable. Sometimes the Secretary General was successful in acquiring the funds while other times he was not. For instance, Mauritania had recently begun paying back its arrears and was therefore recovering its membership rights. The move had come after the Secretary General had met personally with the Ambassador. However, Honduras was yet to pay despite an IPU mission being sent to the country and had therefore had its membership rights suspended. There were many circumstances under which Members were unable to pay some of which were understandable. For example, Libya was unable to transfer funds to the IPU and had therefore agreed to pay the money physically. Nevertheless, he urged the Chairs of the geopolitical groups to encourage their Members to pay.

The Chair, speaking on behalf of the representative of Egypt who had made a comment in the event chat, thanked the Secretariat for doing all that was possible to reduce costs and maximize the benefits of ICT.

Item 7 of the agenda

2021 DRAFT CONSOLIDATED BUDGET

(CL/206/7-P.1)

Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden), Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, said that new members had been elected to the Sub-Committee on Finance in June that year. It was the first time that she was addressing the Governing Council as Chair of the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee had been engaged in the entire process of developing the draft consolidated budget for 2021 and had held many remote meetings over the past few months. It had been the job of the Sub-Committee to advise the Secretary General, review and edit all budget-related documentation as well as provide scrutiny and quality control. Members of the Sub-Committee came from every geopolitical group therefore all financial perspectives had been taken into account. Both the Sub-Committee on Finance and the Executive Committee had unanimously approved the 2021 draft consolidated budget.

It was vital that the budget promoted a robust parliamentary response to the pandemic while continuing to realize the ambitions of the IPU. The budget gave a clear message that more multilateralism and parliamentary diplomacy was needed in the coming years. Parliamentary diplomacy could be part of the solution to the current crisis as well as to future ones.

The Sub-Committee had listened to Members as it was preparing the budget. It was under no illusion that Members were facing very challenging times. As a result, total assessed contributions for 2021 would remain the same with no increases envisioned. In that context, it would be useful to review the history of Member contributions. Until 2011, Member contributions had grown at an average of three per cent every year. From 2012, the IPU had implemented a series of cuts with contributions reduced by over CHF 2 million per annum. At that stage, contribution levels had gone back to those of the 1990s before stabilizing again in 2017. In 2021, total contributions would remain well below 2007 levels. Meanwhile, the IPU membership had grown from 150 to 179 Parliaments between 2006 and 2020 which had gradually helped relieve the burden on existing Members.

Voluntary funding for 2021 was expected to be at similar levels to that of 2020 with some new grants anticipated as explained by the Secretary General. She encouraged Members to continue mobilizing funds from their parliaments and governments. A set of guidelines had been prepared outlining good fundraising practices.

The budget stressed the importance of flexibility and new working modalities in response to the COVID-19 crisis. It was unclear how events would unfold next year. The IPU must be ready and responsive to different scenarios. The budget placed a particular focus on communications, new technologies and remote working.

The IPU needed more visibility and more parliamentary diplomacy. Therefore, the budget made provisions for virtual meetings, virtual regional seminars as well as hybrid and inclusive meetings. Members of parliament must engage and adapt to the current world by driving digital democracy. Digital democracy was both inclusive and efficient.

Many initiatives had been postponed in 2020 with fewer physical meetings and less travel taking place. All savings made would go into the Working Capital Fund. The Fund was important for ensuring the financial health and resilience of the IPU and allowed the Organization to function in lean times. The target for the reserves of the Fund had been set in 2006 and stood at half the level of the operating budget. However, that target had never been reached, not even in 2021.

Next year was the final year for implementing the Strategic Objectives of the IPU. The Working Capital Fund as well as Member contributions would be used in that regard. At the same time, 2021 would be a new start for the IPU with a newly elected President and a new Executive Committee. It would also be the year in which a new IPU strategy would be designed and adopted for 2022 and beyond. The Sub-Committee had made financial provisions for that very important work. She hoped there would be even greater focus on the core values of the IPU as well as on its long-term commitments to issues such as the environment, gender, human rights, democracy and freedom.

The total income and expenditure for 2021 had been budgeted at nearly CHF 18 million. A total of 28 per cent of the income would come from voluntary sources.

The IPU was committed to exercising the highest standards of transparency and accountability. As well as undertaking audits, the Organization was improving its results-based management tools for tracking progress in the implementation of the Strategic Objectives.

She recommended that the Governing Council approve the budget.

The Secretary General said that the budget was owned by the Members and therefore reflected their priorities, as advised by the Sub-Committee on Finance. He believed that the budget would move the Organization closer to its objectives. The budget would accommodate the impact of the current crisis and help parliaments respond to it effectively. The bulk of the work of the IPU in 2021 would be conducted via technological platforms. It was therefore a budget that promoted digital democracy and digital parliamentary diplomacy. Making use of technology would be cost-effective allowing the IPU to scale up activities as a result of the savings made. The Organization would continue to give priority to gender equality, human rights and climate change, with all three of those issues mainstreamed throughout the budget in each programmatic and strategic area. Provisions had also been made for the Organization to renew its strategy, which would be done in close cooperation with the next IPU President. Transparency would be another priority with plans to implement a recent study conducted on enhancing transparency within the IPU and in parliaments. There would also be an emphasis on reinforcing communications, with a particular focus on devising a specific communication strategy in the context of relations with the United Nations. He urged members to approve the budget. The Secretariat would then implement it in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner.

The 2021 Draft Consolidated Budget was approved.

The Chair said that the 2021 budget was a strong one that would help bring solutions at a difficult time. The IPU's approach must be people-centred, cost-effective and results-oriented.

Item 8 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

(CL/206/8-P.1 and P.2)

The Chair said that the Governing Council was invited to elect two new members to the Executive Committee. They would replace Ms. M. Kiener Nellen (Switzerland) of the Twelve Plus Group who was no longer a member of parliament and Ms. Y. Ferrer Gómez (Cuba) of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) whose term had come to an end. He had received a nomination from Ms. L. Fehlmann Rielle (Switzerland) to complete the term of her predecessor until October 2021 as well as a nomination from Ms. B. Argimón (Uruguay) to undertake a full mandate for the period 2020-2024.

The nominations were approved.

Ms. B. Argimón (Uruguay) said that she was honoured to be part of the Executive Committee and was committed to taking on the work.

Ms. L. Fehlmann Rielle (Switzerland) said that she was greatly honoured to take up her post in the Executive Committee and was ready to engage enthusiastically. She had already attended various online sessions of the Executive Committee over the past few months which had given her the opportunity to familiarize herself with the agenda of the IPU. It was clear that the IPU was an organization grounded in values such as human rights, gender equality and sustainable development.

Item 10 of the agenda

BRIEF REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE VIRTUAL SEGMENT OF THE FIFTH WORLD CONFERENCE OF SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT AND 13TH SUMMIT OF WOMEN SPEAKERS OF PARLIAMENT

(CL/206/10-P.1)

The Chair said that the IPU, in close cooperation with the United Nations and the Parliament of Austria, had held the virtual segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament in August 2020. The Preparatory Committee for the Conference had worked very hard under difficult circumstances resulting from the COVID-19

pandemic to make the events as meaningful and impactful as possible. The Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament had been attended by more than 115 Speakers of Parliament and had concluded with a strong declaration on parliamentary leadership and multilateralism that delivered peace and sustainable development for the people and planet.

Ms. A. Eder-Gitschthaler (Austria) said that the 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament, organized jointly by the IPU and the Parliament of Austria, had been held virtually on 17 and 18 August 2020. The Summit had brought together 28 women Speakers of Parliament from 26 countries under the theme *Women's parliamentary leadership in a time of COVID-19 and recovery*. The Summit had come at a special time not only because of the pandemic but also because of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was the most ambitious global blueprint for gender equality. The Summit had served to renew commitment towards the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It had also allowed women leaders to discuss challenges related to gender equality and strategies to address them.

Women Speakers had stressed that crises were never gender neutral and the COVID-19 pandemic was no different. Women had been on the front line of the COVID-19 health response and had suffered the most from the socioeconomic consequences of the virus. In response, women Speakers stressed the need to put women's empowerment and gender equality at the centre of crisis response and recovery plans. There were a number of ways in which that could be done. First, countries must achieve gender parity in decision making positions. It was unacceptable that women made up only 25 per cent of parliamentarians and 20 per cent of Speakers worldwide. Second, parliamentarians must pass laws that did not discriminate against women and girls but instead guaranteed gender equality. They must then oversee full implementation of those laws and promote gender responsive budgeting. In particular, the women Speakers had agreed to address the unequal share of unpaid care work, eliminate gender gaps in social protection and ensure equal pay for work of equal value. Doing so was not only the right thing to do but also the smart thing to do. Communities and countries thrived when women were economically empowered.

Lastly, the women Speakers had expressed alarm at the high prevalence of violence against women, including within parliamentary institutions. Leaders must condemn and sanction any acts of sexism, harassment, intimidation or violence against women in parliaments, including online and on social media. Parliaments should start by carrying out surveys to reveal the prevalence of such acts and set up a roadmap to prevent and address them. The IPU *Guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament* should be used as a baseline.

At the close of the session, participants had discussed the preparations for the second segment of the Summit that would take place in 2021 in physical format. It had been agreed that a structure should be set up within the Preparatory Committee of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament that would be responsible for organizing the physical segment of the 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament. The structure should be made up of women Speakers alone.

She encouraged delegates to take home the conclusions of the Summit and integrate gender equality at home.

The Chair said that the in-person segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament would be held in 2021 in Vienna. It was necessary to fill vacancies on the Preparatory Committee. The composition of the Preparatory Committee was based on the geopolitical groups with strict observance of gender parity.

The Secretary General said that the African Group had nominated Ms. C. Gotani Hara (Malawi). The Arab Group had nominated Ms. F. Zainal (Bahrain) to fill its vacancy for a female Speaker. The Asia-Pacific Group had nominated Ms. P. Maharani (Indonesia) but had one additional slot to fill for a female Speaker. The Eurasia Group had one vacancy for a male Speaker but had yet to submit a nomination. GRULAC had nominated Ms. B. Argimón (Uruguay) and Mr. M. Nadir (Guyana). Lastly, the Twelve Plus Group had nominated Mr. W. Schäuble (Germany), Mr. S. Sigfússon (Iceland), and Ms. T. Wilhelmsen Trøen (Norway) but was lacking in one nomination.

The women Speakers on the Preparatory Committee would also be responsible for organizing the in-person segment of the 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament taking place at the same time as the in-person segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament.

The nominations were approved.

The Chair invited the Asia-Pacific, Eurasia and Twelve Plus Groups to fill their remaining vacancies as soon as possible.

The Secretary General said that, awaiting the return of Mr. J. Mudenda who as Teller was attending a post-election meeting with the Independent Auditor, he would present a brief report on the work of the IPU during the pandemic. The Organization together with its Members had been very active and had responded in a flexible and resilient manner.

Early on, the IPU had launched a campaign called *Parliaments in a time of pandemic* to provide data and share experiences in that regard. The campaign had been very successful, especially with parliaments but also in the media and among donors. The Secretariat had devised a number of tools as part of the campaign. They included a compilation of parliamentary responses, such as health measures, legislation and methods of government scrutiny, as well as a question and answer tool on how parliaments were using remote working technologies.

Other tools included guidance notes on the gender and the human rights dimensions of the response to COVID-19, as well as a short video displaying good parliamentary responses. The Secretariat was also in the process of finalizing a note on green approaches to the pandemic in conjunction with the United Nations Environment Programme.

For the purposes of business continuity, it had been necessary to invest in new equipment so that staff could work remotely and efficiently online. The Secretary General had wanted to demonstrate that the IPU and its Member Parliaments were open for business. It had been an era of virtual, electronic democracy and an era of adaptation.

The IPU had also been pursuing its normal work plan. Work had continued on implementing the IPU Strategy 2017-2021 with many meetings taking place in that regard. The Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament had taken place in August 2020. The Executive Committee had held five virtual sessions, including three meetings of the working group tasked with organizing the virtual session of the Governing Council. The High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism had met in June to review the IPU activities in that area. A webinar had also been organized, in conjunction with UNODC and UNOCT, on helping victims of terrorism. The Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had met in May to examine the human rights cases before it. The Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law had come together to look at the impact of COVID-19 on refugees and stateless persons. Lastly, the Committee on Middle East Questions had met in July to examine developments in the region and make recommendations, particularly on Palestine and Libya.

The IPU had also continued its capacity-building activities. In Botswana, it had organized an induction programme for newly elected members of parliament. In Djibouti, it was continuing to promote parliamentary contributions to human rights work. In Germany, it had made a presentation on sexism and sexual harassment in parliaments. A host of activities had also been undertaken in Myanmar, Mauritania, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Republic of Tanzania, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, and Zambia.

Furthermore, the Organization had been active in terms of its research projects. In particular, it had been preparing the next editions of its flagship publications, namely the Global Parliamentary Report and the World e-Parliament Report. A regional study on sexism and sexual harassment in African parliaments had been carried with the help of the African Parliamentary Union. The Secretariat had also published a note on parliamentary administration and support and was pursuing the preparatory work for the next report on youth representation in parliaments.

The Chair said that the Executive Committee had also been working very hard. The hard work was worthwhile because it was for the benefit of the people.

Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Turkey) thanked the IPU for organizing webinars during the pandemic. It had been very valuable to connect and find out what other parliaments had been doing in that regard.

Mr. J. Mudenda (Zimbabwe) said that he would present a brief report on the outcome of the virtual segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament which had taken place on 19 and 20 August 2020. The Conference had been held under the overall theme *Parliamentary leadership for more effective multilateralism that delivers peace and sustainable development for the people and planet*. The pandemic had compelled the international community to explore innovative ways of interacting, notably through the use of virtual technologies. It was in that context that the virtual Conference had been actualized. It had been an honour for him to be part of the Preparatory Committee which had met multiple times in the lead up to the Conference in a spirit of openness, inclusiveness and collegiality. He looked forward to the second segment of the Conference to be held in-person in Vienna in 2021.

The Conference had been an opportunity to generate a strong message of parliamentary leadership and solidarity as countries learnt lessons from the pandemic and tackled global challenges.

Over 115 of the world's top legislators had taken part, discussing topics such as effective multilateralism, robust parliamentary diplomacy, climate change, sustainable development, health, youth, gender, democracy, human mobility, counter terrorism, and science and technology. The Conference had provided a space for an interactive debate consisting of five panel discussions and five reports. There had been contributions from many notable figures, such as the former IPU President, the Speaker of the National Council of Austria, the UN Secretary-General, and the President of the UN General Assembly. The virtual segment had culminated in the adoption of a robust declaration which provided a roadmap for the future. Speakers urged parliamentarians to build on what had been achieved paying particular attention to their policy-making, law-making, budgetary, and oversight responsibilities. They had also pledged to reinforce the role of parliaments in global governance through enhanced multilateralism and international solidarity.

Moreover, the Conference had been a seminal platform for the IPU to deepen its ties with the United Nations and other partners. The declaration had been formally presented to the UN General Assembly and circulated among all the UN Member States. He invited parliamentarians around the world to study the Conference publications and reflect on key outcome messages with a view to creating a better world.

Mr. C. Dong (China) said that, as a result of the joint efforts of the IPU Secretariat and parliamentarians, the virtual session of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament had taken place successfully in August 2020. The declaration adopted reflected the consensus among parliamentarians that more unity and cooperation was needed. The COVID-19 outbreak had demonstrated that all countries were closely connected. Parliaments worldwide should implement the declaration as well as the other outcomes of the Conference. It was important to uphold multilateralism, support the World Health Organization, and come together jointly to defeat the virus and promote economic recovery. The IPU Secretariat should implement the declaration throughout its work, thus helping to enhance solidarity and cooperation among all parliaments.

Item 5 of the agenda

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

The Chair said the Secretariat was about to announce the results of the first round of voting in the election of the President of the IPU. The first 24-hour remote voting window had opened on 1 November 2020 at 15:00 CET and closed on 2 November 2020 at 15:00 CET. The quorum had been set at 162 members. The Independent Auditor and the Tellers had verified the voting process and the outcome in the presence of the representatives of the candidates.

Mr. F. Maggiore (United Nations International Computing Centre (UNICC)), Independent Auditor, said that he had been appointed to verify the four pillars identified by the Executive Committee for the election: secrecy of the ballot, security of the voting platform, voter identification and authentication, and overall oversight of the process. Based on his analysis, there was reasonable assurance that the four pillars had been met. A few deviations had been identified in telephone number registrations with some not corresponding to those initially provided. In some cases, they were typos while in others, they were completely different telephone numbers. However, those deviations had not altered the final outcome of the process.

The Secretary General said that the results of the first round of voting were as follows:

-	Number of votes cast	394
-	Required majority	198

Number of votes obtained:

-	Mr. M. Sanjrani (Pakistan)	52
-	Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal)	222
-	Mr. A. Saidov (Uzbekistan)	67
-	Ms. S. Attaullahjan (Canada)	53

Having obtained the absolute majority of votes cast, Mr. D. Pacheco was elected to serve as President of the IPU for the term 2020-2023.

The Chair congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election.

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) said that it was an honour to be elected President of the IPU. He had been elected thanks to the support of colleagues from many different countries and continents. He would be a President for the whole Organization and would work closely with all. By working together, the IPU would become stronger. Parliamentary diplomacy was the key to resolving global problems such as poverty, climate change, terrorism and intolerance. He thanked the Members for their confidence in him, especially the Portuguese speaking countries. He also thanked the Speaker of the Portuguese Parliament, who had presented his candidature, and his staff.

Mr. M. Sanjrani (Pakistan) conveyed his congratulations to Mr. Pacheco. He was committed and available to work with the newly elected President and with all Member Parliaments. He also congratulated the IPU Secretariat for conducting the election in such unprecedented times. Parliaments must come together during the current crisis to serve the people they represented.

The sitting rose at 17:25 CET.

Third sitting

Tuesday, 3 November

The sitting was called to order at 14:05 CET on the Interprefy videoconferencing platform, with Mr. Chen Guomin (China), Vice-President of the Executive Committee and Acting President of the IPU, in the Chair.

Item 5 of the agenda (cont.)

ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION

The Chair invited the newly elected President, Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) to give his formal acceptance speech. Mr. Pacheco brought a wealth of experience to the IPU. He strongly believed in the Organization, seeing it as the ideal forum from which to serve humanity and address global challenges.

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) thanked a number of people and institutions that had supported his candidacy, including the Speaker of the Portuguese Parliament, the Portuguese Parliament itself, the Portuguese delegation to the IPU, his parliamentary team, the Portuguese Government, parliamentarians from across the world, particularly those from Portuguese speaking countries, and his family.

His election had taken place at a special moment for humanity. The pandemic had highlighted how interdependent the world was and how countries must come together to overcome problems.

The IPU was the highest expression of parliamentary diplomacy. With a 130-year history of defending democracy, freedom and the rule of law, it was a forum where parliamentarians from six continents came together to overcome global challenges. At the same time, the Organization must keep modernizing and adapting. The year 2020 had been a good example of how the IPU could adapt in a new and unexpected context.

Despite the unprecedented circumstances, the IPU must start working towards a life after COVID-19. It must not lose focus on protecting its values. It must get back to the essentials, take concrete action, promote real change and achieve real results. Only then would it be possible to create a more inclusive democracy and address problems such as intolerance, migration, climate change, women's rights, and youth empowerment. Only then would it be possible for the IPU to achieve the visibility it strived to achieve in the international sphere. Only then would it be possible for countries to feel that they mattered. Indeed, it was not enough to simply approve resolutions.

As President, he would be the same person he had always been. He would remain in love with the IPU and stay available to everyone. He called on his fellow parliamentarians to support him. He also wished to enlist the expertise of former Presidents and the commitment and support of the Secretariat.

He urged Members to give the IPU the energy it needed and work towards strengthening the Organization. Together, the IPU and its Members would start a new stage characterized by close cooperation with the United Nations. Together, the IPU was stronger.

Ms. S. Kihika (Kenya), speaking on behalf of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election as President of the IPU. The online election had been a historic achievement for the IPU. Another great achievement was the percentage of women members participating in the virtual session of the Governing Council (40%). She urged Mr. Pacheco to maintain or even increase that percentage in all IPU meetings and to promote women's political participation and leadership more generally.

The 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action had been an opportunity to take stock of progress and setbacks on the way to achieving gender equality. Mr. Pacheco should focus his attention and action on five key objectives: (1) promoting gender parity in parliaments and at the IPU; (2) putting the rights and the empowerment of women and girls at the centre of efforts to confront the COVID-19 crisis and build back economies; (3) supporting the elimination of discrimination against women and girls in law; (4) condemning and combatting all forms of violence against women, including in parliaments; and (5) engaging men in the above efforts, and investing energy and money in gender equality.

Mr. M. Bouva (Suriname), speaking on behalf of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election. He hoped that Mr. Pacheco would continue modernizing business at the IPU, including by championing the use of new technologies. In addition, he urged Mr. Pacheco to be a champion for youth participation at the IPU and in its Member Parliaments. The IPU had a 10-year track record of supporting youth participation in parliament. It had investigated the barriers preventing young men and women from being in office, gathered evidence on youth representation in parliament and provided policy-orientation to enhance youth participation. However, progress had been slow and the time had come to step up those efforts.

Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the African Group, appreciated the efforts made by the IPU to organize the virtual session of the Governing Council. He congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election. The African region had a great deal to offer the newly elected President in terms of support and cooperation and looked forward to working with him.

Mr. A. Alnuaimi (United Arab Emirates), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election at such a difficult time. The Arab Group had high hopes for the new President and reiterated its support for him. Mr. Pacheco had a great deal of experience in the Portuguese Parliament which would benefit the IPU greatly.

Over the next few years, the IPU should focus on issues such as climate change, poverty, unemployment and international peace. It was important to prioritize the Palestinian question. A two-State solution must be found with a view to ensuring justice for the Palestinian people. There was also a need for the IPU to update and upscale its programmes.

Mr. Chen Fuli (China), speaking on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, extended his warmest congratulations to the newly elected President, Mr. Pacheco.

The world was going through unprecedented changes as a result of COVID-19. The pandemic had shown that the interests and futures of different countries were closely connected. Parliaments should come together in a spirit of unity and collaboration to fight against global threats and challenges.

Mr. Pacheco would move the IPU forward to greater success making significant contributions to world peace and development. It was important to continue upholding multilateralism and promoting a people-centred philosophy. The organization should redouble its efforts in areas such as sustainable development and counter-terrorism. There was also a need to build up the wisdom and power of legislators with a view to bringing more tangible benefits to people all over the world. The Parliament of China would support Mr. Pacheco in his work by strengthening its cooperation with the IPU and its Member Parliaments.

Mr. K. Kosachev (Russian Federation), speaking on behalf of the Eurasia Group, expressed his congratulations to Mr. Pacheco on his convincing victory. A new chapter was ahead for the new President and for the IPU. He hoped that cooperation would be just as positive and productive as it had always been. He looked forward to working with Mr. Pacheco to organize the UN-IPU conference on interfaith and interethnic dialogue that would take place in the Russian Federation in 2022. He would also keep in mind that Mr. Pacheco had promised to support the rotation principle in the IPU leadership, which would restore balance among the geopolitical groups.

Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Turkey) congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election and hoped his presidency would be a successful one. The IPU was an extremely important and unique organization in that it represented almost the entire world through its members of parliament. It therefore needed more visibility, recognition and weight internationally. She looked forward to working with the newly elected President and would always be there to give him support.

Mr. D. McGuinty (Canada) said that it had been an honour and a privilege to work with Mr. Pacheco over the past several years, particularly within the Twelve Plus Group. He thanked Mr. Pacheco for his continuing service and dedication. The IPU was much needed in the world and must remain relevant. It should focus on important issues such as human rights and sustainable development. Its findings, resolutions and recommendations should be taken up at the national and regional levels. He wished Mr. Pacheco much success going forward and offered his support should he need it.

Mr. M. Nadir (Guyana) offered his congratulations to Mr. Pacheco who had an impressive political career and, more importantly, a strong commitment to human rights and democracy. The Parliament of Guyana pledged its support to the newly elected President and looked forward to working with him, particularly on issues such as women's rights and youth empowerment. Mr. Pacheco would now be serving not only the people of Portugal but also the people of the world.

Ms. M. Espinales (Nicaragua) wished Mr. Pacheco every success going forward. It was very important that he was a President that governed for all. Under his leadership, the IPU must remain impartial, deliver justice in a balanced way and recognize the right of all people to self-determination. The Parliament of Nicaragua would work with Mr. Pacheco to achieve peace, prosperity and a flourishing economy.

Ms. A. Gerkens (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group, congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election. As Chair of the Twelve Plus Group, Mr. Pacheco had been diplomatic, fair and transparent. He had been guided by the core principles of the IPU and always kept his eye on the ball. She hoped he would lead the IPU in the same way. The world was facing many challenges, including terrorism, COVID-19, global warming and human rights violations. Mr. Pacheco should dedicate his leadership towards addressing those challenges. The Twelve Plus Group pledged its support to Mr. Pacheco.

Mr. N. Bako-Arifari (Benin), speaking on behalf of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election. Mr. Pacheco had a robust commitment to the ideals of the IPU, such as democracy, peace and human rights, particularly the human rights of parliamentarians, and was willing to engage in active collaboration. He also wished to recognize the outgoing President, Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico), for her availability and unfailing commitment to defending the human rights of parliamentarians.

Mr. B. Llano (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC), offered his congratulations to Mr. Pacheco. Mr. Pacheco brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to the IPU. Under his leadership, parliamentarians would continue working towards the various objectives of the IPU. GRULAC was dedicated to working closely and actively with the newly elected President and wished him every success.

Ms. M. Baba Moussa (Benin) congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election and asked him to address challenges such as equality, justice and sustainable development, particularly in smaller countries. She also congratulated the outgoing President, Ms. G. Cuevas Barron (Mexico).

A representative of Angola congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election and pledged her support to him. She was certain he would fill the shoes of the outgoing President given his experience and history at the IPU. Mr. Pacheco would take the IPU to new heights, particularly on issues such as parliamentary democracy, sustainable development, youth empowerment and women's participation. Portugal and Portuguese-speaking countries were counting on him.

The Secretary General offered his warmest congratulations to Mr. Pacheco on his hard-earned victory. Mr. Pacheco had taken on a huge responsibility. Members had placed their trust in him and articulated their expectations. The Secretary General was certain that Mr. Pacheco would live up to those expectations and be deserving of that trust.

The Secretariat wished to reiterate its commitment to supporting Mr. Pacheco as he gave concrete expression to his vision and the IPU addressed global challenges. The Secretary General hoped to achieve a unity of purpose and a meeting of minds with the President. It was important to work together towards the ideals of the IPU as dictated by the founding fathers, namely peace, security, democracy and strong parliaments. Collectively, the President, the Secretariat and the Member Parliaments could take the IPU to greater heights.

A representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran congratulated Mr. Pacheco on his election. The IPU was the pioneer of parliamentary diplomacy. It had a significant contribution to make in terms of upholding democracy, peace, security, justice, equality and sustainable development around the world. It was up to the IPU to promote parliamentary diplomacy as a complimentary process to inter-governmental diplomacy.

Mr. Pacheco should take decisive steps towards resolving many of the world's problems in a transparent and inclusive manner. He should tackle poverty; dismantle unfair international economic and financial systems that led to a regression in development; challenge the hegemonic policies of some major powers and prevent the imposition of unilateral sanctions; condemn the endorsement of

occupation, notably in Palestine; confront environmental destruction, oppose all forms of terrorism and address non-compliance with global agreements: and tackle abuses of human rights and freedom of expression.

The Islamic Republic of Iran was ready to work with Mr. Pacheco towards attaining those objectives.

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) said that his country had experienced a revolution 40 years ago that had led to a transition from dictatorship to democracy. In that context, he had learnt first-hand the importance of values such as democracy, freedom and the rule of law. Those values were at the core of the IPU.

It was not possible to talk about democracy without defending the human rights of parliamentarians. It was for that reason that the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was so important. In addition, democracy must be inclusive, particularly of women and young people. He had been the youngest Member of Parliament when he had first been elected and knew very well the value of young parliamentarians. Indeed, young people often brought different perspectives and solutions to problems. Women also had different perspectives which made their contributions paramount. He was happy to say that the representation of women in the Portuguese Parliament had increased from 10 per cent to 35 per cent over the course of his career.

The pandemic had shown that all countries were interconnected. Multilateralism and parliamentary diplomacy were therefore very important. The best way to find solutions was to engage in discussion and take into account different points of views. It was his responsibility to foster that kind of discussion. Indeed, he was taking on a huge responsibility. The world was facing many problems. He would do his best to solve those problems and leave the IPU stronger than when he received it.

He thanked the Secretariat for organizing the election at such a difficult time. He was proud to represent the IPU. He was the same person as he had always been and promised to work hard for the IPU and for the world as a whole. He urged all Members to work together. Together, the IPU was stronger.

Item 9 of the agenda

BRIEF REPORT BY THE COMMITTEE ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PARLIAMENTARIANS

The Chair said that the Governing Council would hear a brief report on the activities of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and would be invited to adopt a number of related decisions. The Committee had held its 162nd session in online format from 22 to 31 October 2020.

Mr. N. Bako-Arifari (Benin), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Committee had been holding virtual meetings during the COVID-19 crisis. It had met in May 2020 to examine urgent cases as well as over the past two weeks to examine new cases and cases subject to new developments. Altogether, the Committee was dealing with the files of 511 parliamentarians. It would be impossible to include all of them in his report. However, the Governing Council should rest assured that the Committee was working on all the files. At its most recent meeting, the Committee had examined the situation of 297 parliamentarians from 19 countries, including 12 new complaints concerning 70 parliamentarians. Admissibility decisions had been adopted for some new cases, namely for Colombia, Mongolia, Pakistan, and Yemen. In his report, he would present the situation of 185 parliamentarians from 16 countries and the decisions taken in respect thereof.

Cases in Africa

Côte d'Ivoire

The Committee had examined the case of Mr. G. Soro, former Speaker of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire. Mr. Soro had been deprived of his civil and political rights, notably his right to stand in the recent presidential election that had taken place on 31 October 2020.

Moreover, the Committee was concerned about the detention of another parliamentarian from Côte d'Ivoire, Mr. A. Lobognon, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The arbitrary proceedings brought against him lacked any material proof. The Committee took note of the fact that four other members of parliament had been released from detention and called on the authorities to release Mr. Lobognon immediately.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

The Committee had examined, for the first time, the case of Mr. J. Mamba, a Congolese parliamentarian and member of the opposition. Mr. Mamba was currently in exile for fear that he could be arrested, put on trial and sentenced arbitrarily for exercising his rights as a parliamentarian. The Committee took note of the positive steps taken by the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of the Congo but indicated that those steps were still insufficient. He called on the authorities to protect the rights of Mr. Mamba.

Gabon

Mr. J. Ndoundangoye, a member of parliament from Gabon, had been in solitary confinement since 9 January 2020. The Committee had declared his case admissible and expressed its concern surrounding the conditions of his detention. It called on the Gabonese authorities to protect the rights of Mr. Ndoundangoye, particularly in the context of the pandemic. The Committee would also like to receive information justifying each of the allegations made against Mr. Ndoundangoye, outlining the parliamentary procedure used to lift his parliamentary immunities and indicating the measures taken to investigate allegations of torture and threats.

Uganda

Another situation examined by the Committee was that of five Ugandan parliamentarians who had been arrested during a by-election in the municipality of Arua in August 2018. The parliamentarians had been subjected to torture in detention and accused of treason, a crime punishable by death in Uganda. With the help of the Speaker of Parliament, the IPU had been able to send a delegation to Uganda in January 2020 with a view to gathering information first-hand. However, the Ugandan delegation had decided not to meet the Committee virtually at its last session. The Parliament of Uganda should use its powers to find a satisfactory solution to the above cases, which would, in turn, help to strengthen the Parliament. The Committee remained at the disposal of the Parliament.

United Republic of Tanzania

The case of Mr. T. Lissu, a long-standing member of the opposition, was presented for the first time. Mr. Lissu had been consistently subjected to intimidation by the Tanzanian Government of which he was an open critic. On 7 September 2017, Mr. Lissu had survived an attempted assassination carried out by attackers armed with AK-47 rifles. Despite having been shot 16 times he had survived his injuries. After having spent three years in exile, where he had received medical treatment, Mr. Lissu had returned to Tanzania in July 2020 to stand in presidential elections. Since his return, he had been subjected to more threats and intimidation. The Committee urged the Tanzanian authorities to carry out a thorough and effective investigation into the attempted assassination and the recent threats and acts of intimidation which had, so far, gone unpunished.

Zimbabwe

The Committee had examined the case of Ms. J. Mamombe, one of the youngest Members of the Zimbabwe Parliament. On 13 May 2020, Ms. J. Mamombe and two of her colleagues had been kidnapped, tortured and subjected to sexual abuse during a 24-hour period of arbitrary detention. After having made such severe allegations, Ms. Mamombe had been arrested and accused of having invented her own kidnapping. The Committee had declared the case as admissible and was extremely concerned. It called on the authorities of Zimbabwe to do everything possible to protect the rights of Ms. Mamombe and carry out an effective, independent investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Cases in the Americas

Brazil

Mr. D. Miranda, a Brazilian parliamentarian, had been the target of harassment and death threats as a result of his sexual orientation and support for minority rights, including the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. It had been alleged that the life of Mr. Miranda was in danger given the murder of his colleague and friend, Ms. M. Franco. The Committee had declared the case admissible. It also called on the Brazilian authorities to identify those responsible, end impunity and provide information on the measures taken to protect Mr. Miranda.

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The individual cases of 134 opposition parliamentarians from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had been examined by the Committee. The situation there was extremely worrying. Many parliamentarians had been continuously subjected to grave violations, such as torture, harassment, threats and stigmatization on the basis of their political opinions. The acts had been carried out by agents of the State, paramilitary groups, and violent groups made up of government supporters. The Committee strongly condemned the grave suppression of parliamentarians. It also denounced the many measures taken by the executive and the judiciary to undermine the integrity and independence of the National Assembly. The situation was a clear attempt to obstruct the will of the people as expressed in the election of December 2015.

New elections would take place on 6 December 2020. The Committee called on the Venezuelan authorities to refrain from any actions that would violate the rights of the current Members of the National Assembly. The Committee was deeply concerned by the restrictions currently in force and the institutional framework governing the upcoming election under which fair conditions did not exist. Members of the opposition should be able to exercise their right to take part in public affairs in the same way as members of the party in power. The authorities should take all necessary measures to resolve the above issues without delay.

The Committee called on the entire IPU membership, permanent observers, parliamentary assemblies and international human rights organizations to ensure that concrete measures were taken to resolve the individual cases before the Committee and to find a sustainable solution to the political crises taking place in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Cases in Asia

Mongolia

The case of Mr. S. Zorig of Mongolia was one of the most symbolic cases before the Committee. Mr. Zorig had been murdered more than 20 years ago but the case had still not been solved. Worse still, innocent people had been deliberately imprisoned and tortured to justify the crime. The authorities must make the case a priority and bring the people responsible to justice. The Committee would not give up on the case until solutions were found.

Philippines

Ms. L. de Lima, a Senator and human rights activist from the Philippines, had spent three and a half years in detention without any real proof being presented against her. The Committee was convinced that criminal proceedings had been instigated against her because of her fierce opposition to the way in which President Duterte had conducted the war on drugs. The Philippine authorities should release Ms. de Lima immediately and drop all charges against her. Meanwhile, the Committee called on the Philippine Senate to adopt a stronger position in favour of Ms. de Lima returning to work.

Cases in Europe

Belarus

Another symbolic case before the Committee was that of Mr. V. Gonchar who had disappeared on 16 September 1999 in Belarus. His disappearance had taken place the night before a parliamentary session during which he had been expected to present information incriminating President Loukachenko. The Committee had received credible information showing that the State was directly responsible for his disappearance. It was regrettable that the Parliament of Belarus had refused to take part in the hearing. The Committee called on the authorities to give a credible explanation of the facts and carry out an effective independent investigation to establish the truth and end impunity. The authorities should authorize the IPU to carry out a mission and bring to light new information. All IPU Members and relevant organizations should take concrete measures to ensure that justice was served.

Cases in the Middle East and North Africa

Palestine

The Committee had examined the case of Mr. M. Barghouti and Mr. A. Sa'adat, two former parliamentarians from Palestine placed in detention by Israel after unfair trials. The Committee was concerned about the two men in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. It called on the Israeli authorities to release them and provide information regarding their current detention conditions.

Egypt

Lastly, the Committee wished to present the case of Mr. M. al-Nagar, a former parliamentarian from Egypt who was currently missing. The Committee was particularly concerned because the Egyptian authorities were not investigating his disappearance. Mr. al-Nagar had been sentenced to three years in prison for having expressed an opinion but had not served his sentence for fear of what could happen to him in detention. The Egyptian authorities should open an investigation into his disappearance and take the necessary measures to find him.

Over the past five months, the Committee had sent four letters to the Egyptian authorities as well as an invitation to take part in an online hearing. However, the Committee had not received a response until 2 November 2020. The response contained some reservations concerning the decision on Mr. al-Nagar. The reservations would be included in the final version.

In conclusion, human rights should remain a priority during the health crisis. Measures taken to contain the virus should not be a pretext to violate the basic rights of parliamentarians and of citizens in general. Parliamentarians needed the support of the IPU more than ever in times of crisis. The members of the Governing Council were urged to adopt the decisions of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

The Chair said that there was not enough time for an in-depth discussion of the report. Therefore, members had been asked beforehand to submit any reservations, observations or rejections in writing. So far, he had received two written reservations from Egypt and Zimbabwe and a communication with additional information from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Reservations were submissions containing clear opposition with regard to a specific decision and would be marked as reservations on the first page of that decision and made available on a dedicated webpage. He took it that the Governing Council wished to adopt the set of decisions presented by the President of the Committee of the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

It was so decided.

Mr. A. Dichter (Israel) said that Mr. M. Barghouti was no longer a parliamentarian but a terrorist and a prisoner. He was responsible for the murder of five people and had been sent to jail for five life sentences. Therefore, any international supervision should be done by the International Committee of the Red Cross and not by the IPU. The IPU should defend parliamentarians not terrorists. It was important to protect civilians.

Ms. R. Elwani (Egypt), regarding the case of Mr. al-Nagar, said that the issue at hand was an important one. However, the Egyptian authorities had not been given enough time to respond to queries. The authorities had been working positively and cooperatively with the IPU despite being under pressure due to parliamentary elections. She requested more time so that the matter could be properly investigated.

Mr. J. Mudenda (Zimbabwe) said that the due process of the courts was taking place over the situation of Ms. J. Mamombe. She was currently free on bail but could not stand trial due to mental illness. He was hopeful that she would respond positively to treatment so that she could stand trial at a later date.

It was wrong to encourage the Zimbabwe Parliament to disrespect the separation of powers as enshrined in the Constitution. Under the separation of powers, the Parliament should not interfere in the due process of the courts unless a miscarriage of justice was visible or pronounced. Similarly, it was wrong to encourage the Zimbabwe Parliament to disrespect the principle of sub judice. The principle of sub judice also prevented the Parliament from interfering in the due process of the courts.

Otherwise, the Zimbabwe Parliament would be on the lookout for any unwarranted violation of the rights and freedoms of Ms. Mamombe and would inform the Committee should anything emerge.

Mr. C. Prospero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the National Assembly of Venezuela was the only autonomous entity that existed in the country. Yet, more than 150 of its members had been persecuted and detained simply for having different opinions. He wished to thank the IPU for its support. Over the past month, an electoral fraud had also been taking place in his country. Under the Constitution, it was the National Assembly that should nominate representatives to the National Electoral Council, but instead, those nominations had been imposed. The National Assembly would continue representing Venezuelans and fighting for the rights of its parliamentarians.

Mr. B. Qassim (Palestine) said that the statement by Mr. A. Dichter (Israel) was not true. Mr. M. Barghouti was not a terrorist but a freedom fighter, human rights activist and a man of peace. In addition, he had been democratically elected by the Palestinian people. It was important for the IPU to visit Palestinian prisoners. However, the Israeli authorities were refusing to allow such a visit. The Palestinians were fighting for freedom, independence and sovereignty. The Israelis were the ones engaging in terrorist acts.

Mr. A. Alnuaimi (United Arab Emirates) supported the position of Egypt. All countries should interact with the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians in the same way as Egypt. The Committee should serve the people of the world.

Mr. N. Bako-Arifari (Benin), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, responding to Mr. A. Dichter (Israel), said that any situation in which a parliamentarian had been arrested, tried or imprisoned without his or her immunities being lifted or without the necessary guarantees of a fair trial was considered a valid case for the Committee to examine. It was considered a priority case in the event that the Committee did not receive a suitable response from the authorities in relation to a parliamentarian who had been detained. Such cases should be reviewed regularly. The Committee had sent several letters to the Israeli authorities asking them to authorize an IPU visit. The purpose of the visit would be to meet with the imprisoned parliamentarians and review their detention conditions. Israel was a democratic State, a defender of human rights and an active Member of the IPU. Therefore, the Committee fully expected the Israeli authorities to help the IPU in achieving its objectives.

He took note of the observations made by Ms. R. Elwani (Egypt) and thanked her Parliament for its active cooperation. The comments made by Mr. J. Mudenda (Zimbabwe) would be taken into account, in the continued examination of the case of Ms. J. Mamombe.

Written submissions

The Egyptian House of Representatives expressed a reservation about the decision on the case of Mr. M. al-Nagar, affirming that the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had not given it reasonable and sufficient time to respond to the allegations. According to the Egyptian parliamentary authorities, work is under way to provide and translate the requested documents. The oral comments and reservations expressed by Mr J. Mudenda (Zimbabwe) were also reflected in a written submission. The communication from the Democratic Republic of Congo was considered not as a direct response to the decision on the case in that country but as part of the ongoing dialogue with the authorities regarding that case.

Item 11 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS (CL/206/11-P.1)

The Secretary General said that two categories of meetings would be taking place: statutory assemblies and specialized meetings.

Under statutory assemblies, the Parliament of Morocco had offered to host the 142nd IPU Assembly in Marrakech in March 2021 but had recently asked to postpone it due to uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the Assembly had been repatriated to Geneva and would be held in May or June 2021 provided the pandemic was under control. The Secretariat would inform the Executive Committee of any developments in that regard. The IPU Assembly in Kigali had also been rescheduled for 6-10 November 2021. The Parliament of Indonesia had made an offer to host an IPU Assembly in April 2022 and discussions were ongoing to ascertain the feasibility of that offer.

Specialized meetings would be organized virtually in view of the pandemic and to save costs. The list of specialized meetings went up as far as the year 2022 and was intended to help Members plan ahead. At its previous sitting, the Governing Council had approved the budget for the second segment of the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament and the 13th Summit of Women Speakers of Parliament. It had also filled some vacancies on the Preparatory Committee. The Parliament of Belgium had since nominated one female Speaker to fill the vacancy of the Twelve Plus Group. Vacancies remained for the Eurasia Group and the Asia-Pacific Group.

All meetings had been allocated resources from the core budget or from voluntary funding.

The Chair took it that the Governing Council wished to take note of the offer from the Indonesian Parliament, approve the nomination from the Parliament of Belgium and approve the scheduled future inter-parliamentary meetings.

It was so decided.

Item 12 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE IPU MEMBERSHIP: THE SPECIFIC SITUATION IN MALI
(CL/206/12-P.1)

The Chair said that the Governing Council was invited to review the situation in Mali and take a decision on the country's membership of the IPU. A military coup had taken place on 18 August 2020 leading to the dissolution of the National Assembly.

The Secretary General said that the military forces in Mali had staged a coup d'état on 18 August 2020 following a period of protracted crisis with popular uprisings, insurgency, terrorist attacks and all manner of social upheaval. The military had dissolved the institutions, including the National Assembly, arrested the President and the Prime Minister, and put in place a transitional government. The situation had been condemned by the international community, including by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), and the new Malian authorities had quickly come under pressure, for instance through sanctions and other restrictions. Under that pressure, the new authorities had entered into discussions with various forces in the country and had come up with a transitional plan for a swift return to democracy and constitutional order. The situation had improved considerably since August 2020 with a series of measures being put in place, including the establishment of a transitional national council which would serve as the legislative organ during the transitional period. The transitional national council was foreseen to be in place for 18 months instead of the 3 years initially indicated. Furthermore, the authorities were reporting to regional groupings and had released the President and the Prime Minister. ECOWAS, the AU and the UN Security Council had welcomed the improvements, noting that the authorities were doing their best to restore order.

The IPU had issued a strong statement of condemnation expressing its concern over the unconstitutional accession to power by the military which ran counter to democratic values. The statement had urged authorities to ensure the physical integrity of the political leadership, including members of parliament. The IPU had also offered to assist the Malian authorities towards a speedy return to constitutional rule.

The Executive Committee had deliberated at length on the situation in Mali during two sittings held on 31 August 2020 and on 30 October 2020. On the basis of those deliberations, the Secretary General recommended that the IPU should not automatically suspend the membership rights of Mali but instead monitor developments and work with the authorities towards a speedy return to constitutional rule. The recommendation was in line with the approach that the IPU had taken in the past, for instance, in Thailand, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan and Tunisia. The Secretary General had been in touch with the new authorities who had sent two formal requests asking the IPU for its support in Mali's transition to constitutional order.

The Chair said that the Executive Committee had discussed the situation in Mali at its meetings on 31 August 2020 and 30 October 2020. It had been IPU practice to accompany Members through a transitional period helping to restore constitutional order. There was also a regional trend in favour of taking note of developments and encouraging the new Malian authorities to return speedily to full constitutional order. In that context, the recommendation of the Executive Committee was to maintain the membership of Mali and encourage the IPU to work with the authorities towards a speedy return to constitutional rule, including by helping to design a roadmap. The Executive Committee had entrusted the Secretary General with a mandate to implement the recommendation and report to the governing bodies on a regular basis.

Mr. S. Chenine (Algeria) said that Algeria had a border with Mali as well as deep social relations. As a result, it was aware of how critical the situation was there. The situation in Mali could be an opportunity for terrorist groups to gain ground in the region. He urged the IPU to take care when dealing with Mali.

Mali had made a decision to set up sovereign institutions. Organizations, such as the African Union, supported that decision and highlighted the need to help Mali along the way. The solution must come from Mali itself with the support of the international community but without interference. Mali must be able to retain its own sovereignty. Otherwise, there was a risk of undermining the democratization process. Any errors made in the fight against terrorism could further complicate the situation.

In 2015, Algeria had signed a peace agreement with Mali which could form the basis for a solution. Many other stakeholders were also engaging in dialogue with the belief that political solutions were available.

The stability of Algeria was threatened by the non-establishment of a central State in Mali. As a result, Mr. Chenine supported the approach of the Secretary General. Mali was already taking positive steps. The IPU should support the new government, offer assistance and show solidarity particularly in the context of the pandemic. Algeria, too, had been helping Mali to resolve the crisis. The goal was to help the country return to constitutional order through internal dialogue while respecting all components of the Malian population.

Mr. M. Ali Houmed (Djibouti), President of the Executive Committee of the African Parliamentary Union, said that the authorities in Mali had made significant progress towards constitutional normality. They had met all the conditions set out by ECOWAS. They had named a civil President and Prime Minister to direct the transition and had adopted a charter for the transition with a clear calendar for returning to normal constitutional rule. A transitional national council had been set up and the former President, Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament had been released as had all other politicians who had been arrested. Overall, they had shown good faith and were moving in a positive direction. As a result, ECOWAS had removed all sanctions against them.

In that context, the IPU should not suspend the membership rights of Mali. It should show solidarity with a country that had shown great resilience in the face of many challenges.

The Chair said that he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the recommendation of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 13 of the agenda

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), President of the IPU, thanked the Secretary General and the Acting President for organizing a successful online session despite all the difficulties. As President of the IPU, he would work hard but needed the collaboration of all Members. It was important to work together for a stronger IPU with more visibility and a capacity to find solutions to problems. The work of the IPU must go on even in times of pandemic. Parliamentary diplomacy was essential. He hoped the IPU could resume physical meetings as soon as possible. Networking in informal settings, for instance at lunch, was particularly important for personal relations.

The Secretary General said that the Secretariat had been pleased to help the Members carry out their statutory duties. It had done its level best to make sure the session went smoothly despite difficulties. The role of the Secretariat was to support the political vision of the Members and uphold the values of the Organization. During the session, the Governing Council had taken historic decisions and had clearly articulated its vision for the Organization. He thanked his colleagues for their support. The Secretariat would be at the service of the incoming President whose job would start immediately.

The Chair said that the 206th session of the Governing Council had come to an end. It had been a historic and truly memorable event. Despite many challenges, Members had been able to meet and take important decisions regarding the functioning and governance of the IPU. He had been impressed by the high level of participation in the session (145 Member Parliaments and over 450 Governing Council members). The level of participation in the remote election for the new IPU President had also been remarkable at 97 per cent of the registered Governing Council members with voting rights. It was testimony to the interest and commitment of the members.

The Governing Council had elected Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal) as the 30th President of the IPU. Mr. Pacheco would bring new energy and fresh ideas to the Organization as it faced the many challenges of the ever-changing world. The Members would always be there to help him in his endeavours.

A strong consolidated budget had been adopted for 2021. What was needed next was more parliamentary diplomacy, more multilateralism and more engagement from Members. The IPU was a people-centred, cost-effective and results-oriented organization which should always aim to deliver tangible results and benefits to the people.

He thanked the Secretariat for organizing a successful session. The Secretariat, under the brilliant leadership of the Secretary General, was a committed, dedicated, hard-working team that always delivered the highest level of professionalism. It had put in a great deal of effort to make the session of the Governing Council happen.

The IPU was ever-more relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. People were calling for parliamentary leadership in that regard. He urged countries to mobilize all resources, find science-based solutions and devise a targeted response to COVID-19. Putting people first was vital. No case should be missed and no patient should be left untreated. The world must come together in solidarity and cooperation to fight the virus. It was a battle that would be won.

The IPU was ever-more relevant in the context of promoting peace and development. People were calling for more parliamentary leadership in that regard. The history of development of human society was the history of human struggles against challenges and victories over them. Peace and development remained one of those struggles even in times of COVID-19.

The IPU was ever-more relevant in the context of cooperation between countries. People were calling for more parliamentary leadership in that regard. We were all equal members of an interconnected global village with a common future. No country could gain from another's difficulties or maintain stability by taking advantage of another's troubles. The world was diverse in nature. It was vital to turn that diversity into a constant source of inspiration that drove human advancement and ensured a better life for the people.

The IPU was ever-more relevant in the context of economic globalization. People were calling for parliamentary leadership in that regard. There was a major need to address issues such as the wealth gap and the development divide. It was important to strike a balance between governments and markets, fairness and efficiency, growth and income distribution as well as technology and employment. Ensuring full and balanced development was necessary to deliver tangible benefits to the people.

The IPU was ever-more relevant in the context of the green revolution. People were calling for parliamentary leadership in that regard. All countries must take decisive steps to honour the Paris Agreement and pave the way for the transition to green, low-carbon development.

Together, the IPU could make the world a better place for the people.

The sitting rose at 17:20 CET.