



Inter-Parliamentary Union
For democracy. For everyone.

142nd IPU ASSEMBLY

Virtual session, 24-28 May 2021

Governing Council

CL/207/Inf.1
25 March 2021

Revised Terms of Reference and modalities of the IPU Working Group on Science and Technology

During its 282nd session in Belgrade, Serbia in October 2019, the Executive Committee approved the establishment of an IPU Working Group on Science and Technology based on the French IPU Group's proposal (see [Annex](#)) and asked that clearer terms of reference be prepared for its consideration.

The Executive Committee has examined these revised terms of reference and recommends that they be approved by the Governing Council through the written silence procedure.

Terms of reference

Working Group on Science and Technology

Mandate and purpose

The Working Group on Science and Technology (WGST) shall serve, under the authority of the Executive Committee and the Governing Council, as the global parliamentary focal point for issues related to science and technology.

The IPU WGST should inspire global parliamentary action through legislative work in the field of science and technology. The Group should contribute to the implementation of the science and technology component of the IPU Strategy by focusing on ethics and on combating the inequalities and discrimination that hinder universal access to science and technology.

More specifically, the Group should: advise IPU Members on the implementation of relevant international commitments; participate in the development of information and educational material for parliamentarians; carry out field visits to draw lessons from national initiatives for the edification of the whole parliamentary community; and lend more weight to parliamentary action by devising more effective strategies. The Group would also be called upon to reflect on the civilizational change brought about by science and technology, evaluate the impact of that change on human society and make proposals to parliaments on how to anticipate and prepare for it. The Group will also provide advice on matters that are on the agenda of relevant IPU Standing Committees.

Membership

The Group shall be composed of 21 members from national parliaments who are designated by their respective geopolitical groups based on the following formula (Executive Committee geopolitical group quota plus one per group). The composition shall therefore be:

#IPU142

- 5 members from African Group
- 2 members from Arab Group
- 4 members from Asia-Pacific Group
- 2 members from Eurasia Group
- 3 members from GRULAC
- 5 members from Twelve Plus Group

The members must be appointed based on their proven expertise and experience in the science and technology sector. There must be parity between men and women. In addition, the President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and the President of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians or their representatives shall be ex officio members.

Members of the Group, apart from ex officio members, shall serve for a single four-year term.

Members or their representatives who fail to attend three consecutive meetings will be automatically stripped of their mandates.

If a member of the Group dies, resigns or ceases to be a parliamentarian, the IPU Member concerned shall appoint a substitute to serve until the next session of the Governing Council, when an election shall be held.

International organizations, including CERN, as well as research bodies with expertise in evaluating scientific and technological progress may be associated to the Group.

Chairperson

The Group will be led by a chair elected from among its members, assisted by one vice-chair also elected by the Group. The term of office of the chair and vice-chair is one year, renewable.

Working arrangements

The Group shall normally meet twice a year in regular session, on the occasion of IPU Assemblies. Its sessions shall be held *in camera*. The Group shall set the dates for its sessions based on the proposals made by the Secretary General.

The Group may organize meetings or study visits outside of IPU Assemblies.

The Group determines its agenda and organizes its work as proposed by its chair, in agreement with the IPU Secretary General.

The Group may publish reports for circulation to all the Members of the IPU.

Decisions

The Group shall usually take decisions by consensus. Where no consensus is reached, its main recommendations and the divergent opinions will be presented to the Governing Council.

Reporting

The Group shall report twice a year in regular session on its work to the Governing Council, of which it shall be a subsidiary body.

Proposal from the French IPU Group regarding the establishment of a Working Group on Science and Technology

Scientific and technological progress is accelerating and bringing about civilizational change that is affecting or will affect all human beings. This has or will have an impact on human beings' relationships with each other and with the environment, their way of life, even their spirituality. Parliaments, as the legitimate representatives of all the peoples of the world, should concern themselves more with the impact of science and technology on the future of humanity.

Up until 2003, the IPU had a fourth standing committee dedicated to science, culture and education. For reasons related to optimizing the work of the Organization, the committee was dissolved.

Following the General Debate on innovation and technological change at the 139th Assembly in October 2018, Mr. Michel Larive, MP, on behalf of the French delegation and with the backing of other delegations, proposed that the IPU create an internal structure dedicated to scientific reflection. On 16 October 2018, the participants at the panel discussion entitled "Building bridges between the parliamentary and scientific communities" unanimously recommended that the IPU more regularly include science and education in its work, especially during Assemblies.

It is up to parliamentarians to embrace technological innovation and science to benefit as many people as possible. They also have a responsibility to ensure that science and technology are used ethically and to establish a legal framework to ensure that machines and technology do not take precedence over and are not designed to the detriment of human beings.

To this end, we should forge closer ties between the parliamentary and scientific communities. Better and more regular interaction between the parliamentary and scientific communities would bridge the divide between these two worlds and lead to more enlightened policymaking based on reliable data and to decision-making that takes science into account. This would also enable parliamentarians to stay abreast of increasingly rapid developments in scientific understanding and technological applications.

A cooperation agreement has already been signed between the IPU and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), based in Geneva, on improving parliaments' knowledge of the role that science and technology can play in peaceful and economically fair social development. This has resulted in, among other initiatives, the Science for Peace Schools under the auspices of the IPU Committee on Middle East Questions. CERN, and in particular the models of international scientific collaboration it has developed, could offer valuable support for the work of parliamentarians aiming to boost the positive impact of science and technology on society and to foster intercultural dialogue and peace.

In addition, the IPU could cultivate a worldwide network of scientific partners by drawing in particular on parliaments that already have their own scientific evaluation or information bodies.

A permanent IPU structure dedicated to science and technology would expand the influence and promote the work of the IPU and of parliamentarians among international organizations, major universities and research centres, and among civil society more generally, which is particularly attuned to scientific progress. A permanent structure would help prepare our societies for the civilizational change heralded by scientific progress. Above all, it would allow parliamentarians to take better-informed decisions that are in line with society's evolving needs.

This is why its first order of business could be to draft an ethical charter on the use and application of technoscience. The aim here would be to prevent any risk of social or cultural excesses that could be inflicted on the peoples of the world by commercial, governmental or spiritual entities.