



Inter-Parliamentary Union

For democracy. For everyone.

CL/207/SR
23 July 2021

Summary records of the Governing Council

**207th session
(Virtual session)**

24-25 May 2021

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First sitting

Monday, 24 May 2021
(Afternoon)

The sitting was called to order at 14:10 CEST on the Interprefy videoconferencing platform, with Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), President of the IPU, in the Chair.

OPENING OF THE SITTING

The President, welcoming participants for the first time in his new role as President of the IPU, said that the current meeting was the second to be held by the Governing Council in virtual format, which demonstrated to the world that the IPU and its Members were continuing to work, including for solutions to hasten socioeconomic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. He very much looked forward to in-person meetings for the benefits they offered. Virtual meetings were the only option available at the present time for discussing IPU business and deciding important matters relating to the IPU's functioning and governance. He invited the Secretary General to explain the special arrangements in place for the 142nd Assembly.

The Secretary General, extending a warm welcome to Members joining the virtual meeting, agreed that it was important for the IPU to continue to convene in the current exceptional circumstances and address the challenges of the day. Guided by the Executive Committee, the Secretariat had been working since the beginning of 2021 on the special arrangements for the present Assembly. The Council would shortly be requested to endorse the Special Rules of Procedure for the virtual sessions of the Assembly and Standing Committees, which had been developed by a working group established by the Executive Committee, with support from the Secretariat and the independent Legal Counsel, and approved without objection by Members through the written silence procedure.

The timetable and working modalities of the Assembly were being implemented as detailed in the annexes to the Assembly convocation circulated on 26 March 2021 and, in the coming days, the Council and Assembly would take stock of the work undertaken and formally adopt a number of decisions. As requested by the President, the IPU's statutory bodies had been working continuously in the interval between Assemblies.

During the current week, the plenary sessions of the Governing Council and Assembly were being held on an integrated virtual platform, accessible to all, which combined interpretation in multiple languages, a video feed with multiple participants, and special features, such as a documents and video library where participants could access relevant information pertaining to the Assembly. Registration for the Assembly had been robust, amounting as at 21 May 2021 to 135 national delegations comprising over 750 parliamentarians and some 45 Speakers of parliament.

In keeping with Article 2.3 of the Special Rules of Procedure adopted in November 2020, participation by IPU Members in the Governing Council was limited to titular members. All IPU Members in good standing in the payment of their assessed contributions were entitled to have three members with voting rights on the Governing Council, provided that they included both sexes. Single-sex delegations were entitled to only one member.

In accordance with Article 4 and Article 3.2 of those same Special Rules of Procedure, concerning, respectively, the quorum and registration, the number of registered members of the Governing Council at the registration deadline was used to establish the quorum. By the established deadline of 9 May 2021, 245 Governing Council members had registered for the Assembly. The quorum for the present session had accordingly been set at 123 Members.

In keeping with its spirit of inclusivity, the IPU had accepted the many registrations received after the deadline and was indeed delighted to see so much interest in the Assembly, despite all the challenges brought about by the pandemic. He looked forward to smooth and fruitful deliberations and their culmination in a successful Assembly.

Item 1 of the agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA
(CL/207/A.1.rev)

The agenda was adopted.

Item 2 of the agenda

**ADOPTION OF THE SPECIAL RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE VIRTUAL SESSIONS
OF THE ASSEMBLY AND STANDING COMMITTEES**
(CL/207/2-P.1)

The Special Rules of Procedure were adopted.

Item 3 of the agenda

**APPROVAL OF THE SUMMARY RECORDS OF THE 206TH SESSION
OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**
(CL/206/SR)

The summary records were approved.

Item 4 of the agenda

**VISION OF THE IPU PRESIDENT AND REPORT ON HIS ACTIVITIES
SINCE THE 206TH SESSION OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL**

The President, elaborating on his vision for the IPU that he had briefly shared shortly after his election in November 2020 and reporting on his activities since taking office, said that working together made parliamentarians stronger and enabled IPU staff to give relevance to the needs of the IPU in general and in special circumstances such as those now confronting it. His key objectives included working to reinforce the IPU's visibility, relevance and inclusiveness, further empower women and young people in politics, and strengthen democracy and parliaments the world over. In the six months since he had taken office, it had been difficult, despite his best efforts, to pursue his plans in those areas as fully as he would have wished if circumstances had permitted. Nonetheless, he had participated in 61 meetings and conducted 6 official visits.

In a series of virtual meetings with the Secretary General and his team, he had focused on efforts to enhance the good governance and relevance of the IPU. He had also worked to reinforce the IPU's visibility as an actor on the international political stage and to promote democracy and human rights for all, together with solutions through dialogue. In that quest, he had held virtual or face-to-face meetings with many parliamentarians, participated in webinars and other events, engaged with global and social media, and proposed in addition the establishment of a Cremer-Passy Prize, to be discussed under a separate agenda item, to honour defenders of democracy. He had furthermore sought to consolidate multigender and youth participation in politics by actively supporting the work of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians and the Forum of Women Parliamentarians and had, among other steps, defined a strategy for promoting universal membership of the IPU.

Concerning the Executive Committee, it had departed from its usual practice of meeting only before an Assembly to convene instead virtually on numerous occasions throughout 2021 to discuss items on the current agenda. Several meetings had also been held as part of organizing the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament (Vienna, 7-8 September), the Preparatory Committee for which was working hard to deliver what would be the first such in-person event to take place for many months. Lastly, he hoped to continue making official visits in 2021 to add to the six he had already made to Costa Rica, India, Kuwait, Qatar, Spain, and the United Arab Emirates.

He would be pleased to respond to any questions or requests for clarification concerning his activities which had been possible thanks to the strong support of staff in his own Parliament, together with that of the Secretary General and his team.

Mr. P.T.C. Skelemani (Botswana) commended the President on his activities and expressed the hope that one of his next official visits would be to southern Africa, which would be happy to host him.

Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Turkey), thanking the President for his transparency and accessibility, said that she had welcomed her virtual meeting with him and reiterated the invitation for him to visit her country at the earliest opportunity.

Ms. S. Ntakarutimana (Burundi) said that she appreciated the President's clear vision for the IPU, especially with regard to the participation of women and youth in its work. She urged him to visit the African continent, including Burundi, where he would be most welcome.

The President, expressing thanks for the kind words and invitations conveyed, said that he would be pleased to visit and organize IPU activities in Africa, to which travel might become easier than of late as time went on. Regardless of their size or resources, all countries were equally important to the IPU as an inclusive organization.

Ms. C. Roth (Germany) expressed profound gratitude to the President and to the Secretary General and his team for their robust efforts to strengthen the IPU. In such difficult times, parliaments assumed even greater significance, especially given the role of parliamentarians as guardians of democracy and ambassadors for human rights. She looked forward to seeing the President in person at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. P.C. Dolawatte (Sri Lanka), echoing those sentiments, said that he was grateful for the opportunity that technology had provided for parliamentarians to come together at a time when the entire world was faced with such difficulties as the pandemic and climate change. He looked forward to the day when the IPU Members could again meet and exchange views in person.

Mr. A. Alnuaimi (United Arab Emirates) said that he was pleased by the opportunity to join the present meeting and hoped that the President would focus on priorities of common interest to all, such as poverty eradication, unemployment and the effects of climate change. In that vein, he called on parliamentarians to continue their united efforts for a better world of well-being and peace for all.

The President said that, as an organization with a standing of 130 years and Members drawn from five continents, the IPU had a special role to play within the multilateral system and must be visible, relevant and also respected. All such efforts were therefore welcome in the IPU's endeavour to tackle global problems ranging from, among others, climate change and corruption to post-pandemic recovery, as well as actively defend the values of democracy and human rights on a daily basis.

Reiterating that the Executive Committee had convened on numerous occasions in the preceding six months, he extended his gratitude to all its members for their cooperation and candid exchange of views concerning the important business of the IPU, which was improved as a result. The Executive Committee had agreed that the IPU's statutory bodies and geopolitical groups should work throughout the year. It had also underscored the importance of continuing to enhance the strategic partnership between the IPU and the United Nations; as two faces of the same coin, neither had value without the other and it was therefore a win-win situation.

Recommendations of the Executive Committee submitted to all IPU Members for approval through the written silence procedure and considered approved on that basis included new or revised memorandums of understanding with specialized agencies of the United Nations, in keeping with the framework United Nations-IPU Cooperation Agreement of 2016. Those agencies were the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Also included in the Committee's recommendations were the terms of reference and modalities for the new IPU Working Group on Science and Technology, and the report of an independent consultant on a comprehensive transparency, accountability and openness strategy for the IPU.

He took it that the Council wished formally to endorse those recommendations of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

Item 5 of the agenda

**ANNUAL IPU IMPACT REPORT BY THE SECRETARY GENERAL
ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE IPU IN 2020**

A film showcasing the activities of the IPU in 2020 was projected.

The Secretary General, accompanying his overview of the [Impact Report 2020](#) with a digital slide presentation, said that, despite the challenges of the many constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the IPU had remained resilient and open for business. Parliaments had also retained their relevance in working to deliver an appropriate response to the pandemic in line with public expectations, an endeavour in which the IPU had been proud to assist. With a change of guard at its helm, 2020 had been a year of transition for the IPU, but the transition had been smooth thanks to the strong support of the new President himself. In short, 2020 had been a game-changer for the IPU; it had swiftly adapted to remote working, found new ways of assisting Members and accelerated its digital transformation, meaning overall that its activities had not been overly restricted by the pandemic.

Concerning strategic objective 1, which related to the core business of building stronger parliaments, the IPU had supported parliaments in their pandemic response, including through its [Parliaments in a time of pandemic](#) campaign, which was designed to monitor the functioning of parliaments around the world, identify good practices in the area of remote working and provide relevant information to parliaments lacking in technology. The IPU's [Centre for Innovation in Parliament](#) had been very active and stood as an example of the IPU's foresight in setting up a specialized body to explore ways of harnessing new technologies to improve the workings of parliaments. The IPU had continued the parliamentary capacity-building programmes described in the *Impact Report 2020*, except in Myanmar, where recent developments had led it to suspend its support to that country's parliament.

With regard to strategic objective 2, relating to women's empowerment, the IPU had, in addition to its usual activities in that sphere, focused on combating violence against women, especially in the light of the reported upsurge in such violence during the pandemic. It had, for instance, issued a [guidance note for parliaments on gender and COVID-19](#) as well as [guidelines for the elimination of sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliament](#), which had proved to be very popular.

As to strategic objective 3, on defending human rights, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians had continued to function, undeterred by the pandemic-related restrictions. Its caseload, involving 552 alleged violations in 42 countries, had been even heavier than in 2019. Examples of successes accomplished in 2020 as a result of the Committee's work were cited in the *Impact Report 2020*. Moreover, only very recently, a Mongolian parliamentarian wrongfully imprisoned for a crime he had not committed had been released as a result of the Committee's work.

In accordance with strategic objective 4, the IPU had continued as ever to promote peace, including through support to parliaments in countering terrorism and violent extremism. Its High-Level Advisory Group on that subject had spent much of 2020 on developing tools, such as an interactive map and an application, for enabling parliaments to contribute robustly towards stemming the scourge of terrorism. The IPU had also worked with its United Nations partners and other institutions to increase the number of ratifications of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which currently stood at around 50, thanks in part to the substantial efforts of the IPU and its Members.

With respect to strategic objective 5, its aim of encouraging dialogue as a means of resolving conflict and global issues was the foundational premise on which the IPU was created in 1889. As a result, the IPU had always served as a platform for promoting parliamentary dialogue, including through such events as the Fifth World Conference of Speakers, the virtual session of which had taken place in August 2020. Its in-person session, to be held in Vienna in September 2021, would offer parliamentary leaders a further opportunity to pursue dialogue.

Strategic objective 6, concerning the rejuvenation of parliaments through young empowerment, had grown into a key component of the IPU's work in the 10 years since the IPU Assembly had adopted its resolution on youth participation in the democratic process, which had laid the foundation for the current Forum of Young Parliamentarians. In 2020, the IPU had continued to mobilize young parliamentarians to participate in various events, including at the United Nations, and a record number had attended the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament. The biennial report on youth participation in national parliaments had been launched at the recent Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians, together with the *I say yes to youth in parliament!* campaign, which all Members were encouraged to join.

As to strategic objective 7, relating to support for parliaments in connection with the global development agenda, the IPU had focused its activities around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the blueprint for improving the well-being of all. Reflecting the importance of that aspect of its work, the IPU had now produced 13 versions of the self-assessment toolkit it had designed to help parliaments evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts towards attainment of the SDGs. It also continued to work with other partners, such as the World Health Organization, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, and the United Nations Environment Programme, with which it had developed a [policy note for parliamentarians on green approaches to COVID-19 recovery](#).

With regard to strengthening its relationship with the United Nations, which was the essence of strategic objective 8, the IPU had conducted many of the activities described in the *Impact Report 2020* in conjunction with the United Nations. Being two sides of the same coin, it was only natural that both should work together on issues of global governance. The IPU had therefore been keen to ensure the involvement of parliamentarians in global processes and to organize briefings for parliamentarians to help them find ways of taking global challenges to the national level.

It was thanks to its strong governance structures that the IPU had been able to conduct the activities detailed in the *Impact Report 2020* and build further on its existing achievements. For that, he paid tribute to the President of the IPU and to the Executive Committee, which was worthy of its hard-earned reputation as the IPU's administrative oversight body and had met regularly in 2020 to ensure that all IPU policies and legal frameworks were implemented as foreseen. Singling out his colleagues in the IPU Secretariat for their tireless work and dedication in the difficult and challenging circumstances brought about by the pandemic, he expressed confidence that they would continue to live up to the expectations of IPU Members and partners. Lastly, he was pleased to note that the IPU's media visibility was growing by the day and that the IPU was increasingly being referenced in connection with, inter alia, gender equality, youth and the role of parliamentarians in global issues. The fruits of its labour were there for all to read in the *Impact Report 2020*.

The President thanked the Secretary General for his overview of the *Impact Report 2020*, which depicted the excellent work that he and his team had carried out in unusual circumstances.

Mr. P.C. Dolawatte (Sri Lanka), thanking the Secretary General for his informative presentation, said that women's political representation in his region was improving statistically but remained low nonetheless. The fact was that most South Asian women parliamentarians were following in the footsteps of well-known family members, whereas women from more modest backgrounds were much less likely to enter parliament.

Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Turkey), thanking the Secretary General for his well-rounded presentation and highlighting the IPU's support for youth participation in politics, said that her country's Constitution had been amended in 2017 to allow anyone aged 18 or over to stand

for election. She urged support for the IPU's *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!* campaign, adding on another note that the IPU must take a stand in the name of peace and democracy by denouncing the loss of innocent Palestinian lives to State terrorism.

Mr. V. Tsvangirai (Zimbabwe), speaking on behalf of Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda, said that his country's Constitution was set to be amended so as to include a quota of 10 seats for young parliamentarians. In that event, the country would benefit from the input of young ideas for a better way forward to the future. He urged other parliaments to act on their words by proposing similar amendments.

Mr. E. Nyamaa (Mongolia) expressed gratitude to the IPU and its Members for their strong support for his colleague who had consequently been released from his unlawful imprisonment and resumed his parliamentary duties. The episode served as a reminder of the importance of mutual support and cooperation and the vital role of the IPU in ensuring justice for parliamentarians whose human rights had been violated.

The President said that it was always gratifying to learn of positive outcomes achieved by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians in its core work of defending democracy and human rights.

Mr. S. Yang (Cambodia) said that he wished to thank the President, the Secretary General and the Executive Committee for their tremendous work in the face of a disease that had caused so much death, sorrow and desperation.

The Secretary General expressed appreciation for the kind words spoken about the IPU's performance and said that the importance clearly attached to, for instance, young parliamentarians, parliamentary solidarity and defence of the human rights of parliamentarians would inform the direction in which the new IPU strategy should travel. He and his team looked forward to being of continuing service to the IPU membership.

The Governing Council took note of the Impact Report 2020.

Item 6 of the agenda

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND OTHER IPU BODIES
(CL/207/6-R.1 and P.1 to P.14)

The President said that all candidates standing for election to the Executive Committee and other IPU bodies were listed in document CL/207/6-R.1 and that their respective curricula vitae and letters of intention, set out in documents CL/207/6-P.1 to P.14, were available on the Assembly Virtual Event Platform, together with introductory videos by each candidate.

For the Executive Committee, the candidature of Mr. A. Alnuaimi of the United Arab Emirates, representing the Arab Group, for a full mandate running from 2021 to 2025 had been received to replace Mr. A. Abdel Aal of Egypt, whose term would end with the current session of the Governing Council. He took it that the Council wished to approve the nomination and election of Mr. Alnuaimi as a member of the Executive Committee.

It was so decided.

The President congratulated Mr. Alnuaimi on his election and expressed confidence that he would make a valuable contribution to the Executive Committee and to the IPU as a whole.

He took it that the Council wished to endorse the nominations from the geopolitical groups, as reflected in document CL/207/6-R.1, for membership of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law; the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism, and the Working Group on Science and Technology.

It was so decided.

The President said he also took it that the Council wished to take note of the nominations from the geopolitical groups, similarly reflected in document CL/207/6-R.1, for new Bureau members of the Standing Committee on Peace and International Security, the

Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights and the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, which had been endorsed by the respective Standing Committees. The Council was also invited to take note of the new composition of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, as elected by the Forum of Women Parliamentarians, and of the Board of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, as elected by the Forum of Young Parliamentarians.

It was so decided.

The President, with respect to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, said that the Council would need to elect six new members, at least two of whom must be women, for a single term of five years. By the stipulated deadline of 9 May 2021, the IPU had received nine candidatures for those six vacant seats.

With respect to the Committee on Middle East Questions, one of the two vacancies was to be filled by a woman. The only woman among the four candidatures received was Ms. R. Kavakci Kan of Turkey, who could therefore be considered as elected unopposed. He took it that the Council wished to endorse that election.

It was so decided.

The President said that, in respect of the one remaining vacancy for which there were three male candidates, Council members would have an 18-hour window, starting at 17:00 CEST and ending at 11:00 CEST the following morning of 25 May 2021, during which to cast their votes remotely. The procedure would be explained by the Secretary General before voting commenced.

Responding to a comment by **Mr. B. Llano** (Paraguay) in favour of the GRULAC candidate for membership of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, he said that time constraints unfortunately precluded the presentation of candidates during the meeting. All relevant information about the candidates for the remaining vacancies was available on the Assembly's Virtual Event Platform.

Item 7 of the agenda

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP

(a) Achieving universal membership (CL/207/7(a)-P.1)

The President said that the IPU was continuing to work with leaders towards his goal of welcoming the parliaments of all Member States of the United Nations into the IPU membership. The 14 parliaments still unaffiliated with the IPU – all of them equally important in his eyes – comprised those of the United States, Liberia and various small island Caribbean and Pacific States. Concerning the United States, a major international player, it was perhaps a hopeful sign that, under its new Administration, it was returning to multilateralism and active engagement in the various international organizations.

The Secretary General, providing an overview of the information on the subject contained in document CL/207/7(a)-P.1, said that he shared the vision for universality within the IPU, which, having gained 20 new Members over the preceding decade, had accomplished significant progress towards that objective of increasing the current membership from 179 to 193 parliaments. To that end, the Asia-Pacific Group and the Group of Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) were providing welcomed support in mobilizing the related strategy, as were several individual Member Parliaments such as Guyana and New Zealand. The participation of non-Members in IPU activities was always actively encouraged, including through assistance provided from the Parliamentary Solidarity Fund, established in 2017, to those facing financial constraints. The IPU was also actively engaged with the United States Congress, which he and the President were planning to visit in 2021 to pursue with it the conversation about rejoining the IPU. In that connection, the IPU was grateful for the good offices of the Ambassador of Portugal to the United States and of Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who was intending in the near future to submit a bill authorizing Congress to rejoin the Organization. The IPU counted on the solidarity of the geopolitical groups and all parliaments in promoting its initiatives for increasing the membership.

The President added that parliaments should work not only with the IPU but also with all actors who could help to promote attainment of the membership objective. He thanked the Speaker of the National Assembly of Guyana and the GRULAC Secretariat, as well as the Twelve Plus Group and the Chairperson of the New Zealand IPU Group, for their support and for ensuring outreach to, respectively, Caribbean island parliaments, the United States Congress and Pacific island parliaments. Their efforts exemplified the concerted teamwork needed to achieve the desired outcome.

Ms. S. Marri (Pakistan), expressing appreciation for the IPU's work as reflected in the *Impact Report 2020*, agreed that teamwork played an important part in helping parliamentarians to address the challenges facing them, which was no easy task. She condemned the atrocities suffered by innocent unarmed Palestinians at the hands of the Israeli regime, which amounted to war crimes demanding the immediate attention of the international community. The IPU must acknowledge the brutality of those crimes and stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people and indeed all others in similar situations by speaking out against such atrocities.

The President said that dialogue was the only way to resolve difficulties such as those prevailing in the Middle East, which were a focus of the IPU Committee on Middle East Questions. In another example of the IPU's relevance, that Committee uniquely brought together representatives of Israel and Palestine in face-to-face discussions as a matter of course. Its important but difficult task was to keep dialogue open between the two sides and to understand their respective points of view. As an elected body, the Committee represented the entire IPU membership and its work must be respected.

On another note, he said that the Executive Committee had examined the problematic situation of certain Members, namely, those suspended due to arrears; those liable for restrictions due to political problems; and those liable for restrictions due to arrears.

The Secretary General, expanding on that matter while also noting that the issue of outstanding contributions would be addressed under a subsequent agenda item, said that the Executive Committee had examined specific cases, including those of Mali and Zimbabwe, and taken note of the extraordinary circumstances behind the non-payment of their contributions. In view of those circumstances, it had decided to recommend that the Members concerned should be permitted to participate in the proceedings of the Governing Council and the Assembly, on the understanding that they would make every effort to pay their contributions. Mali had since informed the IPU that it had issued instructions for payment of its outstanding contributions, whereas Zimbabwe was prevented by sanctions from making transfers abroad and was therefore seeking alternative modalities for payment in good faith.

The President said he took it that the Executive Committee wished to approve the recommendations of the Executive Committee with respect to increasing the IPU membership and addressing the problematic situation of certain Members.

It was so decided.

(b) Situation of certain parliaments

The Secretary General, accompanying his remarks on the situation of certain parliaments with a digital slide presentation, recalled that the IPU, with a view to proposing solutions, continued to monitor the situation of parliaments that were either not functioning or were in major political or other crises.

Beginning with the situation in Myanmar, he said that the free and fair parliamentary elections held in that country in November 2020 had been annulled in February 2021 by the military authorities following their coup d'état. The lawmakers ousted in that coup had formed a legislative body in exile, namely the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), which had been declared illegal by the military. In response to a request from the Permanent Mission of Myanmar in Geneva for it to refrain from recognizing the CRPH, the IPU had expressed concern about and condemned the subversion of democratic processes in Myanmar. The Executive Committee's recommendation was that Myanmar should not be suspended from the IPU membership, albeit that its parliament was in abeyance, as to do so would surely be construed by the military authorities in Myanmar as condoning their actions. It

also recommended that the CRPH should be granted observer status at the current Assembly as a mark of solidarity with its members. The IPU looked forward to a swift return to normalcy in Myanmar and to the participation of a fully-fledged parliament in IPU activities.

Ms. A. Gerken (Netherlands), speaking in her capacity as Chair of the Twelve Plus Group, said that the Group was pleased to support the recommendation and also stood with the United Nations Security Council in calling for the immediate release of all political detainees in Myanmar and an end to all repressive measures targeting the country's civilian population. The Group stressed the need to uphold democratic institutions and processes and fully respect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. It hoped that the Council would endorse its position.

Mr. P.T.C. Skelemani (Botswana) said that it was important for the Council to endorse the Executive Committee's recommendation on Myanmar in order to send the message that government derived from the people and not from those wielding arms against civilians.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to endorse that recommendation and the position of the Twelve Plus Group.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, turning to the situation in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, said that the parliamentary elections held in that country in December 2020, following the usual five-year interval, had been boycotted by many Venezuelans. At the same time, parliamentarians elected in 2015 had decided that they should remain in office until such time as what they considered to be free and fair elections were conducted. There were consequently two parliaments in existence, each of which had provided the Executive Committee with an explanation of its claim to IPU membership.

After discussing the two claims and consulting the relevant rules, the Executive Committee had decided that it should assess the situation on the ground and had been pleased to receive invitations from both parliaments for a country visit, which, given the previous absence of clear and decisive cooperation from the Venezuelan Government to welcome and work with an IPU delegation, was a positive development. The Executive Committee therefore recommended that further action on the issue of Venezuela's membership in the IPU should be deferred until after the mission had taken place, in late June or early July 2021. The mission would hence examine the political situation in the country, including in terms of the legality of the most recent elections, as well as collect first-hand information about the cases of Venezuelan parliamentarians under consideration by the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

The President concurred that the IPU was working to achieve dialogue between the leadership of the country and the opposition. The long-awaited invitations were very welcome and the outcome of the mission would be reported to the Executive Committee and thereafter to the Governing Council.

Mr. P.T.C. Skelemani (Botswana) said that dialogue was the only way forward to a solution and that continued efforts to bring the two parties together were only to be encouraged.

The President, agreeing with that analysis, said the IPU would always do all it could to promote solutions but would never impose them on any party. He took it that the Council wished to endorse the Executive Committee's recommendation concerning Venezuela.

It was so decided.

The Secretary General, referring to the situation in Yemen, recalled that the parliament elected in 2003 had eventually split into two factions, one based in Sana'a and the other in Seiyun. The latter was aligned with the internationally recognized Government of Yemen and had been active in the IPU since 2019. Taking into account the view on the matter of the Committee on Middle East Questions, as well as of other bodies such as the Arab Parliament, the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union and the League of Arab States, the Executive Committee recommended that the IPU should continue to recognize the

Seiyun-based parliament as the representative of Yemen at the IPU. It further recommended that the Head of delegation should continue to encourage dialogue between the two parliamentary factions, as the support of all Yemeni parliamentarians was needed to resolve the crisis in their country and ensure that necessary humanitarian assistance was provided to citizens.

The President said that the recommendation of the Executive Committee was to recognize the Seiyun-based parliament as the representative of the Yemeni people not just because it was collaborating with the IPU but also because it was recognized by the United Nations and the broader international community.

Mr. A. Alnuaimi (United Arab Emirates), expressing support for the Executive Committee's recommendation, said that it was important to recognize the Seiyun-based parliament as the representative of the Yemeni people. It was actively working for a peaceful solution, as any parliament should, including by engaging in the international efforts to that end. Its recognition by the IPU would help to drive forward those efforts, with the IPU playing a complementary role in taking Yemen into a new and peaceful phase.

Mr. C. Nshimirimana (Burundi) added that the Yemeni people were in need of assistance; their country was at stake and respect for its Constitution was essential to forestalling contradictory situations.

Mr. S. Albarkani (Yemen) said that the tragic war was devastating his country, killing hundreds by the day and creating immense difficulties for its population. Those responsible were deaf to international calls for an end to the fighting and blind to the mediation efforts of the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for Yemen, with whom his parliament had worked constructively for two years, gaining as a result some recognition as the country's legitimate parliament.

Unfortunately, however, Yemen continued to face provocative military action, currently exemplified by the offensive against Marib, and 46 parliamentarians had been sentenced to death by a Houthi fatwa. He thanked the IPU for its full cooperation and interaction with his parliament following United Nations resolutions. Yemen was proud to be a long-standing Member of the IPU, which had always been generous in its support. He welcomed the Executive Committee's recommendation and appealed to all parliamentarians to call for the release of those 46 parliamentarians on death row. Assuring the previous speaker that the actions of his parliament had always been fully consistent with the country's Constitution, he expressed confidence that the IPU's support would help Yemen to emerge from its years of crisis.

The President, again stressing the crucial role of dialogue for peace, commented that it was virtually impossible for others to grasp the situation in a country that was simultaneously embroiled in fighting a conflict and a pandemic.

Mr. P. Katjavivi (Namibia) commended the IPU for its efforts to find ways of resolving conflicts affecting parliaments in various parts of the world. In that context, he wondered to what extent countries neighbouring countries in conflict had demonstrated vital goodwill and cooperation in promoting the kind of dialogue for peace sought by the IPU.

The Secretary General said that the IPU spared no effort to bring people together, which included working with parliamentarians across the board to forge unified responses to national crises, as in the Yemeni and Venezuelan cases. Any headway made was duly reported to the Council. The IPU's efforts to adopt an equitable approach in listening to all parties in the Venezuelan crisis, for instance, had brought about the invitation for a mission, which was already an achievement. It was the foundational role of IPU Members to promote such dialogue.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to endorse the Executive Committee's recommendation concerning Yemen.

It was so decided.

Item 6 of the agenda
(resumed)

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND OTHER IPU BODIES
(CL/207/6-R.1 and P.1 to P.14)

The President said that the time for proceeding to remote elections was approaching and invited the Secretary General to explain the voting procedure.

The Secretary General, noting that the remote elections pertained to six vacancies on the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and two vacancies on the Committee on Middle East Questions, recalled the articles of the Special Rules of Procedure he had cited at the opening of the session, concerning participation in the Governing Council, quorum and registration, and further recalled that the quorum for the session had been set at 123.

The remote voting would proceed in accordance with Rule 29 of the Rules of the Governing Council and Article 8 of the Special Rules of Procedure. Rule 1.2 of the Rules of the Governing Council, as amended in October 2019, also provided that: "Each Member of the IPU shall be represented on the Governing Council by three parliamentarians, provided that its representation includes both men and women. Single-gender delegations will be limited to one member."

With regard to the six vacancies on the Committee of the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, he recalled Rule 1.4 of the Rules and Practices of the Committee, which stated that the Committee must comprise no fewer than four members of either sex. Hence, at least two of the new members must be male and a further two at least must be female. Delegates could select up to six candidates and the six receiving the highest number of votes, taking into account the gender-parity requirement, would be elected.

Listed in the order in which they were received, the nine candidates for the six vacancies were: Ms. C. Sousa of Portugal; Mr. S. Cogolati of Belgium; Mr. S. Spengemann of Canada; Ms. L. Quartapelle Procopio of Italy; Mr. F.A. Silva Facetti of Paraguay; Mr. B. Mbuku Laka of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Mr. H. Traoré of Mali; Ms. C. Asiain Pereira of Uruguay; and Mr. Chhit Kim Yeat of Cambodia.

With respect to the Committee on Middle East Questions, one of its new members must be male and another female. As the only female candidate, Ms. R. Kavakci Kan of Turkey, had already been elected unopposed, it remained for the Council to select one of the three male candidates for the second vacancy. The candidate obtaining the highest number of votes would be elected. Listed in the order received, the three candidates were: Mr. M. Alsisi Albuainain of Bahrain; Mr. G. Migliore of Italy; and Mr. M. Almheri of the United Arab Emirates.

As mentioned earlier, information on all candidates, including their respective biographies and video presentations, were available on the Assembly's Virtual Event Platform, as well as via the Assembly application. Candidates should be elected on the basis of their competence, availability and commitment, irrespective of their nationality or affiliation to a geopolitical group. Once the 18-hour voting window had opened, at 17:00 CEST, members would receive email and text-message reminders at certain intervals. Members who had not voted by 10:00 CEST on the following morning of 25 May 2021 would be sent a final reminder of their civic duty to vote before the window closed at 11:00 CEST. The note circulated on remote voting and elections during the Governing Council contained details of the remote voting hotline that members could contact throughout the 18-hour window in case of technical difficulties. The results of the elections would be announced at the Council's next sitting on the afternoon of 25 May 2021.

The elections were declared open.

Item 7 of the agenda
(resumed)

QUESTIONS RELATING TO IPU MEMBERSHIP

(b) Situation of certain parliaments

The Secretary General, resuming his presentation of the situation of certain parliaments, said that, in respect of the remaining parliaments it had discussed, the Executive Committee had made no recommendations for endorsement by the Council, which was therefore requested only to take note of the latest developments.

Concerning the situation in Mali, he recalled that the country's National Assembly had been dissolved in 2020, following a coup d'état, and that the military authorities had established the Transitional National Council as the country's legislative body. Although it had expressed strong concern over those developments, the IPU Governing Council had decided not to suspend the membership of Mali in view of the junta's agreement to abide by a Transitional Charter, valid for 18 months, and establish a new constitutional order. As requested, he had pursued discussions with the new Malian authorities with a view to assisting the Transitional National Council to discharge its functions, which included the establishment of a new framework for democracy in Mali. In accordance with the road map developed in that context, a constitutional referendum would be held in October 2021 and parliamentary and presidential elections in February or March 2022. While continuing to monitor the situation, the IPU would work in the interim with the Transitional National Council in respect of a new set of laws and the inclusion of gender and youth affairs in the new constitutional framework.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to take note of the situation in Mali.

It was so agreed.

The Secretary General, speaking of the situation in Chad, recalled that the military authorities had assumed power following the assassination of the country's President and had ultimately decided that the country's parliament should continue to function until an interim legislature was established, which was expected to happen in the near future. Concerned by the return to military rule in Chad, the Executive Committee urged a speedy transition to normalcy and remained open to providing support for the country's legislature to that end.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to take note of the situation in Chad and express its displeasure at the military interference in the country's governance.

It was so agreed.

The Secretary General, with reference to the situation in Haiti, said that the country's parliament was paralysed by the delay in elections for both houses and that the Executive Committee looked forward to the swift organization of those elections. As to the Sudan, the Council's earlier decision not to suspend its membership of the IPU following the coup of 2019 had been on the understanding that an interim legislative council would be established, which was yet to occur. The Executive Committee therefore looked forward to the swift establishment of such a council.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to take note of the situations in Haiti and the Sudan.

It was so agreed.

The Secretary General said that, in Libya, there had recently been strong indications of progress towards a resolution of the ongoing crisis there. A cross-section of the Libyan political class and other partners in Libya had appeared to endorse the announcement of parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2021. The IPU consequently hoped to

welcome a fully-fledged Libyan parliament to its Assembly in the spring of 2022. That apart, the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians was continuing to monitor and take action on the case of a disappeared Libyan parliamentarian whose whereabouts remained unknown.

The President said he took it that the Council wished to take note of the situation in Libya.

It was so agreed.

The President said that the Executive Committee had also considered the situations in Burundi and Thailand and concluded that democracy was again working well in both countries. He therefore took it that the Council wished to endorse the Committee's proposal to remove their names from the IPU's list of countries of concern and to continue extending IPU assistance to both.

It was so decided.

Ms. A. Gerkens (Netherlands), speaking in her capacity as Chair of the Twelve Plus Group, made the following statement:

"On behalf of the Twelve Plus geopolitical group, I would like to raise our concerns regarding the recent imposition of sanctions on parliamentarians in a number of Twelve-Plus member group countries by national authorities in China. These sanctions have been imposed on parliamentarians for carrying out regular duties to debate matters which have been widely discussed in relevant United Nations forums, namely the treatment of the Uyghur people in Xinjiang and restrictions on democracy and political activity in Hong Kong.

The Twelve Plus Group wants to speak out to defend the fundamental right of all parliamentarians anywhere in the world to freely express themselves without fear in the course of their parliamentary duties, particularly on the floors of our own legislative chambers as well as in IPU meetings. This is a sacrosanct principle which lies at the very core of representative democracy that has always been reflected in the values and objectives of the IPU since its inception.

The Twelve Plus Group will raise this matter with the IPU Executive Committee to explore if these recent actions by China fall within the ambit of that Committee's work or if its mandate warrants a review to see how such violations of the human rights of parliamentarians by any other country might best be addressed given the unprecedented nature of these actions."

Ms. M. Baba Moussa (Benin) thanked the IPU for its assistance to her country's parliament and said that she looked forward to continued cooperation among parliamentarians and to the outcome of the elections for the remaining vacancies on the Forum of Women Parliamentarians.

Mr. Chen Guomin (China), referring to the statement made on behalf of the Twelve Plus Group, said that it was based on groundless accusations and rumours and furthermore had no relevance to the item under discussion. It was difficult to comprehend how an organization that stood for democracy could allow itself to be used as a platform for such statements as opposed to a platform for dialogue and conversation among its membership of over 170 parliaments of sovereign States holding a variety of views. The IPU deliberated on the basis of facts and evidence alone and was there to defend the rights of the people and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. Parliaments represented none other than the people whose lives were their priority.

The President said that he took note of those comments and indeed understood their motivation. There was no censorship at the IPU, however, and it could not be known in advance what delegates might say when they took the floor or whether they were going to address matters irrelevant to an item under discussion or make a political statement. In that event, comments made were noted and nothing more, provided that they involved no personal attacks on an individual.

The sitting rose at 17:20 CEST.

Second sitting

Tuesday, 25 May 2021
(Afternoon)

The sitting was called to order at 14:05 CEST, on the Interprefy videoconferencing platform, with Mr. D. Pacheco (Portugal), President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in the Chair.

Item 6 of the agenda (continued)

ELECTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND OTHER IPU BODIES (CL/207/6-R.1 and P.1 to P.14)

The Secretary General recalled that remote voting in the elections to fill six vacancies on the Committee of the Human Rights of Parliamentarians and one vacancy on the Committee on Middle East Questions had commenced at 17:00 CEST on the previous day of 24 May 2021 and ended 18 hours thereafter, at 11:00 CEST that morning.

With respect to the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, the results for each candidate, listed in the same order as in the ballot paper, which was the order in which the candidacies had been received, were as follows:

Quorum: 123

Number of votes cast: 233

Number of votes obtained:

Ms. C. Sousa (Portugal)	149
Mr. S. Cogolati (Belgium)	111
Mr. S. Spengemann (Canada)	131
Ms. L. Quartapelle Procopio (Italy)	148
Mr. F.A. Silva Facetti (Paraguay)	76
Mr. B. Mbuku Laka (Democratic Republic of the Congo)	96
Mr. H. Traoré (Mali)	74
Ms. C. Asiain Pereira (Uruguay)	125
Mr. Chhit Kim Yeat (Cambodia)	88

Having obtained the most votes, Mr. S. Cogolati (Belgium), Mr. S. Spengemann (Canada), Mr. B. Mbuku Laka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Ms. L. Quartapelle Procopio (Italy), Ms. C. Sousa (Portugal), and Ms. C. Asiain Pereira (Uruguay) were elected to fill the six vacancies on the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians.

The Secretary General, with respect to the Committee on Middle East Questions, recalled that Ms. R. Kavakci Kan of Turkey, as the only candidate for the one vacancy to be filled by a woman, had already been elected unopposed and that there were three candidates for the one remaining vacancy to be filled by a male. The results of the remote voting for each candidate, listed in the same order as in the ballot paper, which was the order in which the candidacies had been received, were as follows:

<i>Quorum:</i>	123
<i>Number of votes cast:</i>	231
<i>Number of votes obtained:</i>	
Mr. M. Alsisi Albuainain (Bahrain)	41
Mr. G. Migliore (Italy)	101
Mr. M. Almheri (United Arab Emirates)	77

Having obtained the most votes, Mr. G. Migliore (Italy) was elected to fill the one vacancy for a male on the Committee on Middle East Questions.

The President congratulated all the candidates on their election and expressed confidence that they would contribute in their new positions to further strengthening of the IPU.

Item 8 of the agenda

FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR 2020 (CL/207/8-R.1 to R.3)

A video message from Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden), highlighting the importance of parliamentary cooperation and dialogue to building back better in the post-pandemic world, was shown.

Mr. A. Gryffroy (Belgium), Internal Auditor, delivered his report as set out in document CL/207/8-R.3, recommending on the basis of his examination of the financial statements presented by the IPU that the Governing Council should approve the financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2020.

Ms. C. Widegren (Sweden), Chair of the Sub-Committee on Finance, in presenting the financial report and audited financial statements, contained in document CL/207/8-R.1, and the report on the financial situation of the IPU as at 31 March 2021, contained in document CL/207/8-R.2, said that it was clearly imperative during such unpredictable times for parliamentarians to unite through the platform offered by the IPU to deploy the important and effective tool of dialogue in setting strategic goals for a prosperous future. Good finances were equally important as a tool for increasing the IPU's relevance and efficiency over the coming years. As at the current date, over three quarters of the assessed contributions for 2021 had been received, demonstrating the laudable commitment of IPU Members to prioritizing the prompt payment of those contributions, notwithstanding the pandemic crisis, and to the IPU as a multilateral organization. In certain cases where financial difficulties prevented the timely payment of contributions, individual payment plans had been agreed with the Members concerned in the light of their circumstances, which was a mark of the IPU's seriousness in working towards the aim of universal membership. The IPU was thus making every effort to ensure that the 12 parliaments with payments currently in arrears of three years or more were not suspended from the membership.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, voluntary funding had not only remained stable but also increased, thanks to new partnerships and particular support for the IPU's work relating to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate change and gender equality. The IPU welcomed that increase and its positive impact on its activities in the context of the Organization's eight strategic goals, which accounted for three quarters of its budget. She encouraged parliaments to take the opportunity to save taxpayers' money by investing through voluntary contributions in the multilateral parliamentary work effectively delivered by the IPU on a daily basis.

Faced in 2020 with the global pandemic, the IPU had made the adjustments needed for it to remain relevant and continue its core activities. The lack of in-person meetings had saved resources, which the IPU had invested in digital democracy so as to conduct its usual business through virtual events, including webinars and dialogue forums.

The new External Auditor – the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAGI) – had echoed its predecessor in reporting a positive audit opinion concerning the IPU's Financial Statements for 2020 in all respects, including compliance with the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), and in confirming the accuracy of the Financial Statements. In its remote audit, the CAGI had found the IPU to be a healthy organization with strong internal controls and had commended the constant support it had received from the IPU team. Its two recommendations, accepted by the IPU management, were that the IPU should continue to tailor its risk-assessment framework to the COVID-19 environment and that the format of Note 15 should be more closely aligned with the budget document.

Those recommendations had been made in the interest of enhancing transparency and accountability, both of which were similarly key to the work of the Sub-Committee on Finance. The Sub-Committee met on a regular basis and all geopolitical groups were engaged in its activities. She thanked all colleagues for their sustained efforts to further strengthen the IPU's efficiency and inclusiveness and likewise thanked the Executive Committee for continuing to entrust the Sub-Committee with reviewing the financial and other matters referred to it.

Highlights of the financial results for 2020 included the operating surplus of around CHF 1.7 million, which was due to reduced travel and meeting expenditures as a result of COVID-19-related restrictions, and the Working Capital Fund, which stood at 96 per cent of the target level set by the Executive Committee in 2006. In common with other organizations, the IPU was analyzing the potential impact of COVID-19 on future funding and the likely practical implications for programme delivery. The External Auditor had recommended that, as an organization centred around communication, in-person meetings and human contact, the IPU should assess the most cost-effective digital investments with a long-term view to finding workable alternatives that struck the right balance between the need for digital communication and the need for in-person meetings while avoiding the high costs often associated with hybrid meetings.

The Sub-Committee on Finance and the Internal Auditor had each expressed satisfaction with the External Auditor. Thanks to its healthy and well-managed finances, the IPU had weathered the extraordinary global crisis in 2020. Moreover, it had the resources needed to tackle the many challenges ahead through multilateral dialogue in particular and to unite with others in harnessing the opportunity provided by the pandemic to build back better. With those factors in mind, the Executive Committee had recommended that the Governing Council should approve the Secretary General's financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2020.

The President congratulated the Chair and members of the Sub-Committee on Finance for their exemplary work and commended the Secretary General and his staff on their successful administration of the IPU's finances.

The Secretary General welcomed the heart-warming sentiments expressed about the soundness of the financial administration of the IPU and thanked the Chair and members of the Sub-Committee on Finance for their strong guidance, leadership and oversight in that context, recognizing in addition the role of stakeholders, both within and outside the IPU.

One quarter of the IPU's budget was funded from a healthy and widening mixture of voluntary sources, including parliaments, which helped the IPU to meet the expectations of its membership. The IPU was grateful for the contributions received from donors, among them the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, with support from the Swedish Riksdag; the Government of Canada, which was continuing its support for the IPU's

gender equality activities in particular, as was Irish Aid; the European Union; and United Nations organizations, including the United Nations Development Fund, the World Health Organization and the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. The IPU was hopeful that other parliaments would follow the examples of the National People's Congress of China, which had made substantial contributions in support of the IPU's work on the SDGs and on countering terrorism; the Parliament of Angola, which had donated towards the IPU's health-related activities; and the Parliament of Micronesia, which had provided voluntary funding for spending in the areas of migration, gender equality and governance. The IPU also looked forward to the possibility of a further boost to its resources from the Parliaments of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

Last but not least were the in-kind contributions made to the IPU, exemplified by the decade-long commitment of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea to seconding members of its staff to assist the IPU in its research activities and learn in the process about the functioning of an international organization. The Austrian Parliament was also newly seconding a member at the ambassadorial level of its foreign service to the IPU as a focal point in support of its work with United Nations agencies. The IPU much appreciated those valuable contributions and encouraged others to follow suit, which would bring the added advantage of increasing the IPU's relevance as a pillar of multilateralism – a relevance that must be upheld if the challenges faced in such troubling times were to be overcome. Members could be assured that, through its deployment of the resources made available to it, the IPU would continue to do its level best to maintain the standards that they had come to expect of such a global organization.

Ms. A.D. Mergane Kanouté (Senegal) extended thanks to all members of the Sub-Committee on Finance for their excellent work and to the Secretary General for his continued dedication to the IPU's cause throughout the pandemic crisis and for the professionalism that he and his team had demonstrated, leading to the positive results that inspired Members' confidence. The reported voluntary funding for gender equality was particularly important to achieving the goal of gender parity in elected bodies and therefore encouraging. Information about the IPU's activities was now more widely available owing to the innovations made in the area of communications, thereby enhancing the visibility of the IPU as an institution thanks to which parliamentary cooperation and diplomacy had become a reality.

Mr. G. Binzagr (Saudi Arabia), commending the positive financial results achieved, said that the IPU had a proud history as one of the world's longest-standing multilateral institutions. It was during such times as a global pandemic that those institutions were most appreciated for their contribution towards addressing the challenges facing all of humanity. Represented in its parliaments, the global community had renewed its strong commitment to the IPU, as reflected in the soundness of the IPU's governance and financial situation. Institutions such as the IPU helped that community to strengthen unity through respecting its commonalities while celebrating its unique differences and to address challenges and attain aspirations through productive dialogue.

Mr. Chen Fuli (China) congratulated the Secretary General and his team for the work done and said it was gratifying to learn that, despite the difficulties caused by the pandemic, most Members had paid their assessed contributions to the IPU. The Chinese National People's Congress had always paid its contributions on time and in full, in addition to which it had donated US\$ 4 million overall towards the IPU's parliamentary capacity-building and counter-terrorism-related activities. It welcomed the IPU's healthy financial situation and trusted that the IPU would effectively direct its hard-earned funds towards efforts to maintain international peace and security, deepen cooperation on the COVID-19 crisis, restore the global economy, and promote sustainable development for the improved well-being of all.

Ms. L.B. Malema (Mozambique), supported by **Mr. P. Katjavivi** (Namibia) and **Mr. J.M. Kabund-a-Kabund** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in echoing the thanks expressed for the excellent reports on the IPU's financial situation, said that the IPU was an encouraging example of the value of strength, unity and solidarity in the face of a global pandemic during which the IPU had continued to conduct its business. Her country was dealing with a multitude of problems but continued to stand strong nonetheless and had paid its contributions to the IPU.

The Secretary General, thanking those who had spoken for their kind words and, recalling the pledge he had made on his election to keep the IPU's finances on an even keel, said that he had constantly strived to ensure that Members believed in the institution and continued to provide the resources needed for it to live up to their expectations. He expressed gratitude to the IPU's financial staff for their strong support and reiterated his commitment to the ongoing delivery of services guided by the membership.

The Governing Council approved the Secretary General's financial administration of the IPU and the financial results for 2020.

Item 9 of the agenda

FUTURE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY MEETINGS

(CL/207/9-P.1)

The President said that, while virtual meetings would continue for the time being, the IPU was keen to resume in-person meetings at the earliest opportunity, as it was important to parliamentarians to discuss issues face to face and build inter-personal relationships in the process.

The Secretary General, presenting the updated list of future inter-parliamentary meetings set out in document CL/207/9-P.1, said that the IPU remained flexible as to the format of those meetings, which would be virtual – or even perhaps hybrid – in cases where full in-person meetings were ruled out.

Concerning future assemblies, the Parliament of Rwanda had recently confirmed that, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was no longer able to host the 143rd Assembly as planned in November 2021. It therefore requested approval of its proposal to host an Assembly in Kigali on the alternative dates of 19 to 23 October 2022. In the interim, the President and the Executive Committee were exploring other options for the holding of the 143rd Assembly in late 2021. As to the 144th Assembly, the Council had already approved the proposal for it to take place in Bali from 20 to 24 March 2022, subject to the pandemic situation.

With regard to specialized and other meetings, the comprehensive list contained in the document set out the information relevant to each, including in respect of funding sources, and indicated which meetings still required approval. He pointed out that, in the time since the Governing Council had approved the holding of the important World Conference on intercultural and interfaith dialogue: *Working together for peace and humanity*, St Petersburg had been identified as the venue, with 16 to 18 May 2022 as the dates. Another particular highlight was the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament to be held in person, in Vienna, in September 2021.

The President added that, in line with its recommendation that arrangements should be made to ensure business continuity, the Executive Committee had tasked the Secretary General with fine-tuning the IPU's current practices for virtual meetings; exploring the possibility of organizing hybrid meetings; and establishing an IPU platform for both virtual and hybrid meetings.

Ms. E. Nyirasafari (Rwanda), taking the opportunity to note that the new President of the IPU had achieved much in the short time since he had taken office, said that her Parliament would look forward with pleasure to welcoming all participants to Kigali in 2022 should the new dates it had proposed for the twice-postponed Assembly there be approved.

The President said that the IPU was grateful to the Parliament of Rwanda for its flexibility and that the pleasure would be mutual.

Ms. P.A. Komarudin (Indonesia) expressed support for the option of hybrid meetings, including for the 144th Assembly in Bali in 2022, as such meetings would enable at least some in-person interactions and discussions among parliamentarians, provided that conditions allowed.

Ms. S. Marri (Pakistan), after congratulating the President and other colleagues on their election to office, said that she firmly believed that in-person meetings were the best option for parliamentarians, for whom it was infinitely preferable, given the nature of their work, to exchange views with others present in the same physical environment. IPU Members would ultimately continue working together through the available means in the face of challenges such as those presented by COVID-19, with hybrid meetings offering a viable option worth exploring.

The President said that, as an inclusive organization, the IPU naturally favoured solutions that allowed for the participation of all Members. On the assumption that the world would have to learn to live with COVID-19 for the foreseeable future, the IPU would endeavour to introduce hybrid meetings as soon as possible as the next most preferable option to full in-person meetings.

Mr. R. Lopatka (Austria) said that his country's Parliament was pleased to be hosting the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in September 2021, which would be the IPU's first in-person meeting since the pandemic outbreak. With the support of the United Nations Office at Vienna and of the IPU, the Parliament was confident that it could safely host the meeting and additionally hoped to organize a number of cultural events on its sidelines. Austria currently had one of the lowest rates of coronavirus infections in Europe; its vaccination programme was progressing well, and life was almost back to normal. While virtual meetings certainly had their place, as the IPU had proved, finding solutions to problems through face-to-face dialogue was the lifeblood of parliamentarians. The Austrian Parliament thanked the IPU Secretariat for its support with the preparations for the upcoming conference and looked forward to welcoming participants in great numbers.

A film providing an update by Speaker Sobotka of the Austrian Parliament on preparations for the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament was projected.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the list of future inter-parliamentary meetings set out in document CL/207/9-P.1.

It was so decided.

Item 10 of the agenda

CREATION OF AN IPU CREMER-PASSY PRIZE (CL/207/10-P.1)

The President, explaining the proposal of the Executive Committee to create an IPU Cremer-Passy Prize, said that the idea was simply that an annual prize, named after the IPU's co-founders, should be awarded each year to a serving parliamentarian nominated for his or her outstanding contribution to the defence and promotion of the IPU's principles. Nominations endorsed by the respective geopolitical groups would be submitted by the latter to a prize selection board composed of former IPU Presidents, which would decide on the winner and invite him or her to attend the second Assembly of the year to receive the award and address participants. Such a prize would increase the visibility of parliamentarians and their work as well as encourage all parliamentarians to double their efforts in that work in the knowledge that they, too, could be nominated for the prize. Having reviewed the terms and modalities set out in document CL/207/10-P.1 for the Cremer-Passy Prize, the Executive Committee had recommended the creation of the prize.

Mr. P.C. Dolawatte (Sri Lanka), congratulating all those who had been elected to office during the current Assembly, expressed appreciation for the IPU's efforts to increase the numbers of young parliamentarians, such as himself, worldwide. Some of his country's politicians, including parliamentarians, had contracted coronavirus. COVID-19 infection rates were high in Sri Lanka, which was working to combat the spread of the disease and was grateful to those countries that had supplied it with vaccines.

Mr. A. Kuzbari (Syrian Arab Republic), noting that the IPU membership comprised over 170 parliaments representing some 6.5 billion individuals around the world, suggested that it would be more appropriate in the light of those figures to create three prizes instead of just one.

The President said that any nominee not selected for the proposed prize in any one year could be renominated in a subsequent year. The prize was a purely symbolic award for parliamentarians recognized by their own parliaments for their robust defence of the principles of democracy on their home soil. The composition of the prize selection board, moreover, represented an initial step towards benefiting from the knowledge and experience of former IPU Presidents by stepping up their involvement in IPU activities. Lastly, the Cremer-Passy Prize rules had been drafted with input from different countries and recommended by the Executive Committee for approval by the Governing Council. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve those rules as set out in document CL/207/10-P.1

It was so decided.

Item 11 of the agenda

ACTIVITIES OF COMMITTEES AND OTHER BODIES

(a) Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians (CL/207/11(a)-R.1)

Mr. N. Bako-Arifari (Benin), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, accompanying his report on the recent 165th session of the Committee with a digital slide presentation, said that the Committee had continued to adapt during the current pandemic, in particular by relying more on technology for its own meetings and for those with authorities and victims, and to sustain its efforts to drive forward the examination of the 620 cases of violations of the human rights of parliamentarians currently before it in order to find satisfactory solutions.

During its session, the Committee had held five hearings at which it had interviewed authorities and complainants alike. Such interviews were of great importance, as they allowed the Committee to better understand the cases before it, express its concerns, exchange views and encourage dialogue to find satisfactory solutions in compliance with human rights standards. He therefore thanked all those who had taken the time to respond to the Committee's invitation by videoconference.

At the session, the Committee had examined the situation of 170 parliamentarians – 158 men and 12 women – in 13 countries. It had also adopted decisions on admissibility in new cases concerning Myanmar, Senegal, Turkey and Yemen.

The decisions that he would present, in alphabetical order, to the Governing Council for approval, however, concerned 152 parliamentarians in 7 countries.

Egypt

The Committee had again examined the case of the former Egyptian member of parliament, Mr. Mostafa al-Nagar, who had been missing for almost three years. The Committee deeply regretted the lack of cooperation from the Egyptian parliamentary authorities, which had failed to provide any information on the case, despite numerous requests and their initial willingness to cooperate with the Committee. To date, no investigation appeared to have been opened into the disappearance of Mr. al-Nagar, who had been sentenced to three years in prison for having expressed his opinion in parliament and had not served his sentence for fear of what might happen to him in detention. The Committee therefore called on the Egyptian State to take Mr. al-Nagar's disappearance seriously, even if the authorities considered the former member of parliament to be a fugitive. In order to do so, a genuine and effective investigation into his disappearance must be opened, as his family had the right to know his fate.

Libya

On 17 July 2019, Ms. Seham Sergiwa, a member of the House of Representatives of Libya, had been brutally abducted from her home in retaliation for her political views. The Committee remained appalled by that act of violence against a member of parliament, whose fate remained unknown, despite numerous indications as to the identity of her abductors. The Committee reiterated its call on the Libyan authorities to disclose the findings of the investigation report allegedly produced by the Ministry of the Interior, to communicate them in the first instance to Ms. Sergiwa's family, and to provide clarification as to the current status of the case. The Committee also called on the Libyan authorities to ensure that Ms. Sergiwa's abduction did not go unpunished and to deploy every possible means to find her while holding accountable the perpetrators of the crime.

Myanmar

The Committee had again considered the case of 50 parliamentarians in Myanmar, where the human rights situation continued to worsen. It was deeply concerned by new allegations that many elected parliamentarians were being held incommunicado and that several of them were being held in inhuman conditions in prisons where they were allegedly subjected to torture, while others had reportedly been tried in secret. The Committee denounced the use of force to prevent the Parliament of Myanmar from convening at any time as from 1 February 2021 and the prosecution of those who were determined to discharge the parliamentary mandate entrusted to them by the people. The Committee urged the military authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all parliamentarians held in detention or under house arrest and called on them to respect the human rights of all parliamentarians elected in November 2020. The Committee called on IPU Member Parliaments to take action to ensure respect for democratic principles in Myanmar and urged them to show solidarity with their colleagues.

Philippines

With respect to the situation of Senator Leila de Lima, an ardent human rights activist, she had already spent more than four years in detention without any serious evidence being produced against her. In fact, there were strong indications that the measures against Senator de Lima were rooted in her strong opposition to President Duterte's war on drugs. The Committee called on the authorities, once more, to release Senator de Lima and to drop the legal proceedings against her immediately. In the meantime, it urged the Philippine authorities to do everything possible to ensure that Senator de Lima could benefit from teleconferencing and thus participate directly in the work of the Senate.

As to the case of the Philippine parliamentarian Sarah Jane I. Elago, the Committee was extremely concerned that official communications containing baseless accusations against her were regularly published online. Those communications not only discredited her but also put her physical integrity at risk. The Committee called on the Philippine authorities to prevent the dissemination of such messages and to hold those responsible to account. The Committee called on the Philippine Congress to carry out its oversight function so as to ensure that Ms. Elago could perform her parliamentary duties without hindrance from state bodies or officials.

Turkey

The Committee had examined the complaint concerning the case of Mr. Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu for the first time and declared it admissible. It was deeply concerned that Mr. Gergerlioğlu was currently serving a harsh prison sentence for having legitimately exercised his right to freedom of expression. The Committee noted that he had simply sent a tweet referring to a media report and had implicitly called for the opening of peace negotiations with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The Committee considered that, in view of the information on file, Mr. Gergerlioğlu's continued detention was arbitrary and that he should be released immediately. Furthermore, the Committee reiterated its call on the Turkish authorities to take more decisive action to ensure that current national legislation and its implementation were in line with international and regional standards on freedom of opinion and expression.

Yemen

The Committee had examined the situation of several parliamentarians in the House of Representatives of Yemen who had suffered serious violations since the beginning of the war in Yemen in 2015. The Committee was particularly concerned about the arbitrary death sentences handed down to 46 members of parliament, whose physical integrity was currently under serious threat. Those parliamentarians had also been arbitrarily deprived of their property and financial assets, their houses in Sana'a had been ransacked and their families had been driven from their homes. The Committee was deeply concerned about those acts and urged those responsible to refrain from harming the parliamentarians and from using collective punishment measures against their family members. The Committee also called on all parties to the conflict to end impunity and to respect the human rights of the members of the Yemeni Parliament and the Yemeni people.

Zimbabwe

The Committee had again considered the case of Ms. Joana Mamombe, one of the youngest members of parliament in Zimbabwe. The Committee reiterated its deep concern about the allegations that Ms. Mamombe had been arbitrarily detained and subjected to torture and sexual abuse on 13 May 2020. According to information provided to the Committee, Ms. Mamombe had been re-arrested on four occasions, despite previous decisions adopted by the Committee and the Governing Council. The Committee was deeply concerned by allegations that Ms. Mamombe was facing judicial harassment as a result of her work as a young female opposition parliamentarian. The Committee called on the Zimbabwean authorities to do everything possible to ensure that the rights of Ms. Mamombe were fully protected. The Committee believed that a fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe would provide a better understanding of Ms. Mamombe's situation and expressed the firm hope that Parliament and other relevant authorities will respond favourably to its request.

The Committee was aware that IPU Members took the defence of the rights of parliamentarians very seriously and that they were taking concrete steps to ensure parliamentary solidarity. The Committee was keen to collect information systematically on specific parliamentary measures taken to support parliamentarians in danger. He would therefore be grateful if Members could keep the Committee informed of any such initiatives taken by their parliaments, or by them personally. The IPU and the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians stood ready to provide the necessary assistance to help make such actions as effective as possible.

Democracy was in grave danger when human rights were violated and even more so when the violations were committed against the elected representatives of the people. The parliamentarians of the world had a responsibility to turn the international human rights commitments of their States into reality. They also had a great responsibility to raise their voices when their parliamentary colleagues were in danger. He hoped that the Governing Council would approve the Committee's draft decisions and that the Committee could count on the Council's valuable assistance in providing the necessary support to parliamentary colleagues at risk around the world. The full text of those draft decisions on the various cases had been available on the IPU delegates' website since 21 May 2021.

The President said that Members had been invited to submit any comments or reservations concerning those draft decisions in writing and that submissions had been received from Egypt and Yemen. He took it that the Governing Council wished to approve the draft decisions set out in document CL/207/11(a)-R.1.

It was so decided.

Ms. N.W. Makwinja (Botswana), heartily thanking the Committee for what she described as a sobering report, said that the Committee was central to the existence of parliaments around the world. It must therefore be supported to the utmost and assisted to succeed in its important work on escalating violations of the human rights of parliamentarians. All such violations and atrocities should be reported to parliaments with a view to ensuring that those responsible were taken to task. She urged the Committee to continue its good work.

Ms. R. Kavakci Kan (Turkey) said that she greatly valued the Committee's work and recognized its importance, recalling that it had in the past taken up her own sister's case. Her current concern remained, however, that the 64 cases of Turkish parliamentarians currently under consideration by the Committee were paralysing its work and being used in the international community as political leverage. The Turkish authorities would continue to provide as much information as possible on those cases, including that of Mr. Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu, who belonged to the country's second largest opposition party. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey comprised members from 12 political parties, all of whom were responsible to their constituencies. None of those members, however, was entitled to abuse his or her position as a parliamentarian to spread terrorist propaganda.

Ms. A. Awad-Allah (Egypt) said that she rejected the segment of the report relating to her country. Differences and democracy were respected in Egypt, as was political diversity. Prisons for political prisoners were, moreover, non-existent in Egypt, as any international human rights mission would be able to verify. The Egyptian National Assembly, which included opposition parties, exercised political authority in the normal manner and enjoyed the constitutional right to freedom of speech. As to the case involving Mr. al-Nagar, it was a criminal case – not a political one – concerning which the Committee could find full details in the Egyptian response to the letter received from the IPU in that connection. She called on IPU Members to acquaint themselves with the human rights progress achieved in Egypt, including for such groups as women, youth and minorities.

The President said by way of a reminder that any reservations to approved decisions would be clearly indicated on the first page of the decision itself and also be made available on a dedicated webpage.

Ms. M. Baba Moussa (Benin) said that giving effect to democracy, governance and development was problematic in countries – not least those in greatest need of development – where situations such as those reported might occur. The Committee's valuable and challenging work of upholding fundamental human rights was greatly appreciated and once again demonstrated the IPU's service to parliamentarians and peoples.

Mr. B. Qasim (Palestine) said that the report omitted to address the ongoing abuses taking place in the occupied Palestinian territories and the continuing unlawful detention of Palestinian parliamentarians in Israeli prisons. The Israeli authorities regrettably persisted in denying the Committee's access to those individuals. Together with various human rights organizations, the Arab Parliament was calling for an international fact-finding mission to investigate the actions of those authorities against the Palestinian people, which were extensively catalogued in the Human Rights Watch report published on the subject in April 2021. The recent events in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah district, the brutal military attacks on Gaza and the daily apartheid practices against Palestinians qualified as war crimes for which the Israeli authorities must be held to account. His delegation once again urged the Committee to focus on the case of Palestinian parliamentarians in detention by pursuing its efforts to communicate with them and demanding their release.

Mr. J.F.N. Mudenda (Zimbabwe), while commending the Committee's comprehensive and courageous report, expressed surprise at its unfortunate failure to take into account the detailed information that he had provided, at its request, about Ms. Mamombe's case. In addition, the report must be amended to reflect the fact that Ms. Mamombe had not been granted an indefinite leave of absence upon her request until the trials against her were concluded; rather, it was he who had instructed her to take such leave. He regretted the absence of a reply from the Zimbabwean authorities contacted by the IPU but, having followed up the matter after it was drawn to his attention by the Secretary General, he was confident that their reply could be expected imminently.

As explained in the information he had provided, executive orders of arrest such as that issued in Ms. Mamombe's case were not, as intimated in the Committee's decision, subject to validation by parliament, as the country's executive, judicial and legislative powers were strictly separated under the Constitution. If Ms. Mamombe believed that she had been unlawfully arrested, she was entitled to seek redress before the country's Constitutional

Court. Furthermore, it was Ms. Mamombe herself and not members of the ruling party who had stated that she was suffering from mental illness, which was not a pretence on her part. She had admitted in his presence that she was receiving medical, psychiatric and psychological treatment for mental disorders, which had been confirmed by three physicians.

He issued an open invitation for the Committee to visit Zimbabwe – an open and transparent society – in order to further investigate the case of Ms. Mamombe, if not also other alleged human rights violations. He appealed to the Committee to continue pursuing its vital work dispassionately and without prejudice.

The President, reiterating the earlier information he had highlighted about reservations to decisions, expressed thanks for that invitation and his hope that a mission to Zimbabwe could be organized in the near future.

A representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, expressing support for all activities to promote human rights, justice, transparency and integrity, said that some of the Committee's decisions undermined the sovereignty of independent States. The Committee often called only on a country's executive authorities for information, whereas its requests for clarification should be addressed to a country's Member Parliament, which functioned as the IPU's conduit to those authorities and should be held responsible for any failure in that duty. The Committee should also seek the views of Member Parliaments on cases specific to their countries and additionally take the views of the judiciary into account.

The President said he believed that the Committee took into account all reservations and other information received from IPU Members in connection with the cases it was examining.

Mr. J.M. Kabund-a-Kabund (Democratic Republic of the Congo), supported by **Ms. O. Sanogo** (Mali) in expressing appreciation for the quality and detail of the Committee's report, said that the case of Ms. Mamombe of Zimbabwe was perturbing and the more so in view of her status as a young woman parliamentarian. He therefore urged the IPU to do its utmost to conduct a mission to Harare at the earliest opportunity, bearing in mind that the situation could worsen during the time lag between the decision to conduct a mission and the mission team's arrival in the country.

Mr. N. Bako-Arifari (Benin), President of the Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians, responding to comments made, said that the written reservations received from the Egyptian authorities to the draft decision on the case of Mr. al-Nagar had had no bearing on the substance of the draft. The Committee remained competent to consider that case, even though Mr. al-Nagar was no longer a serving parliamentarian. Amendments to the draft might have been a possibility had the Committee's desired interview with the Egyptian parliamentary authorities taken place, but parliamentary elections had prevented such an interview in the first instance and the Committee had as yet received no response to its subsequent request for an interview. The Committee was concerned to learn about the fate of Mr. al-Nagar, as were his family and the complainants in his case. If, as claimed by the authorities, he had wilfully disappeared, then it raised questions as to why no official investigation had been launched to locate his whereabouts and identify those involved. The Committee reiterated its request for further clarification.

Concerning the case in Zimbabwe, the Committee – as mentioned in the related decision – had received pertinent information from the Speaker of the National Assembly, whom he sincerely thanked for his invitation for the Committee to conduct a mission to the country. Such a mission would promote progress in Ms. Mamombe's case and eliminate any misunderstandings that had arisen. It nonetheless remained that Ms. Mamombe had been arrested and released on several occasions, which was worrying. The Committee would also hope to clarify whether her current mental health issues had been prompted by the violence and sexual abuse to which she had been subjected.

With respect to the concerns raised by the Syrian representative about sovereignty, the Committee worked through the IPU Secretariat with the parliaments of sovereign States brought together under the auspices of the IPU. In examining cases involving the human rights of parliamentarians, the Committee was empowered to correspond with a country's executive and judicial authorities, through the IPU Secretariat, with a view to progressing

towards a resolution of those cases. In so doing, it acted in compliance with the Rules and Practices of the Committee, as adopted by the Governing Council, and without infringing on the sovereignty of States.

His report had indeed not mentioned the case of Palestine, but, as he had stated at the outset, the Committee currently had before it 620 cases and was unable to mention but a few of them at each session. It had raised the case of Palestine at the preceding Assembly and responded to the reservations raised by the Israeli Knesset. It had as yet received no positive response to its request to visit Israel.

He had taken note of the observations made by the Turkish representative and commended her constant readiness to engage with the Committee, which had grasped the complexity of the situation in Turkey through its mission to the country in 2019. The Committee nonetheless reiterated its appeal to the Turkish authorities to harmonize the country's counter-terrorism legislation with international and regional norms, notably those of the European Union, as it would help to address some of the human rights issues in Turkey. The Committee encouraged the Turkish authorities to implement the plan that they had developed in that context.

Replying to a question from Ms. Sanogo (Mali) about actions taken by the IPU to deal with human rights violations, he said that the Committee dealt with cases in accordance with a set of established procedures, in particular dialogue, exchanges of correspondence and interviews with parliamentary authorities and with complainants, which often led to solutions and the release of parliamentarians from detention. Such action might be described as a quiet form of parliamentary diplomacy. In the case of gross violations, the Committee might issue a strongly worded statement, through the IPU, that sparked international attention and cooperation from local, regional and international human rights organizations in the efforts to achieve progress. In addition, decisions on human rights cases approved by the Governing Council often had an impact in the countries concerned by prompting them to reconsider the cases singled out in such decisions. The Committee used no coercion, relying only on dialogue and parliamentary diplomacy as its tools for achieving the desired outcome.

The Governing Council took note of the reservations made by the delegations of Egypt, Turkey and Zimbabwe to the decisions approved concerning the cases in their respective countries, and of the observations made by the delegation of Palestine concerning the cases in that country.

Mr. Nyunt Aung Kyi (Myanmar), in a pre-recorded video message on behalf of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) on the situation in his country following the recent coup d'état, expressed thanks to the IPU for its continued support of the CRPH and deep appreciation to IPU Members for their strong support to the IPU President, Executive Committee and Committee on the Human Rights of Parliamentarians in raising the case of the Myanmar parliamentarians who were political prisoners. The CRPH also thanked the IPU for its actions, including its efforts to encourage the military authorities to cease the violence being cruelly inflicted on defenceless Myanmar citizens.

Although Myanmar parliamentarians were dispersed, they were endeavouring to perform their duty of representing those who had elected them. It was thanks to the IPU programme for Myanmar that the CRPH was able to function effectively. The party led by Aung San Suu Kyi was under threat of dissolution, but such illegal actions would not affect the will of the Myanmar people. The CRPH urged IPU Members to call for human rights and democratic principles to be upheld in Myanmar and to support parliamentarians elected in 2020 by recognizing the CRPH.

The Governing Council took note of the message delivered on behalf of the CRPH.

(b) Forum of Women Parliamentarians
(CL/207/11(b)-R.1)

Ms. S. Kihika (Kenya), outgoing President of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the Forum of Women Parliamentarians on its recent two-day virtual session, as contained in document CL/207/11(b)-R.1, said that participants had heard inspiring opening remarks from the IPU President as they discussed the importance of ensuring a gender-responsive post COVID-19 recovery.

The Forum had also discussed the draft resolutions under consideration by the Assembly, noting in those contexts that climate-related disasters, displacement and insecurity severely affected women and girls, who were particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence; that digitalization and the circular economy would not effectively advance the SDGs unless they addressed women's economic inclusion; and that online sexual abuse and exploitation of children, which affected girls in particular, was of paramount importance in an increasingly virtual world. She thanked the Bureau members who had participated in the drafting committees to ensure that those gender dimensions were integrated into the respective texts.

The Forum had additionally agreed that the involvement of parliamentarians in such global movements as the Generation Equality Forum was key, given the amount of work that remained to be done to achieve gender equality, which no country or parliament was able to do alone. It had also held elections to renew half of the membership of the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians and elect a new leadership. She congratulated the newly elected members of the Bureau, in particular Ms. Vasylenko of Ukraine, who had been elected President of the Bureau, and Ms. Ramzi Favez of Bahrain, who had been elected First Vice-President. The position of Second Vice-President remained vacant and would be filled at the 143rd Assembly.

In keeping with the Rules of the Forum and in order to maintain two-year intervals to renew half of the seats of regional representatives on the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, the Forum had decided to extend by one year the term of Bureau regional representatives whose terms had been due to end in 2022. The subsequent renewal of terms would take place in 2023.

The President, noting that gender equality was an objective inherent to the IPU in every aspect of its business, said that the provisional list of participants at the current Assembly showed that 281 of the 732 delegates were women parliamentarians representing 37.4 per cent of participants, which was a record high. Details of the single-sex and gender-balanced delegations attending the Assembly would be included in the results of the proceedings. Much more work was still needed nonetheless to improve on those figures and achieve gender parity.

(c) Forum of Young Parliamentarians (CL/207/11(c)-R.1)

Mr. M. Bouva (Suriname), outgoing President of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians, presenting the report of the Forum of Young Parliamentarians contained in document CL/207/11(c)-R.1, said that young parliamentarians called for a future that was resilient, equitable, smart, green, inclusive and fair. The reality exacerbated by the pandemic was that not all interests were reflected in a world where only 2.6 per cent of the world's parliamentarians were under 30 years of age and where young people could be old enough to vote but not to stand for election to parliament. They were politically marginalized, notwithstanding their pioneer volunteering role in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 through their support for older persons and the vulnerable and their strong advocacy for democracy and climate action for a better present and future.

In that context, the Forum of Young Parliamentarians had called for youth to play a greater role in building more representative and inclusive democracies and for a new development model that responded to the needs and interests of all generations. The Forum had also presented the outcome document from the recent Seventh Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians as its contribution to the present Assembly and launched the new IPU campaign *I Say Yes to Youth in Parliament!*

As part of its support for youth participation and leadership in the IPU, the Forum had welcomed the new membership of its Board and elected a new President of the Board, Ms. Sahar Albazar of Egypt. Infused as a result with fresh energy and enthusiasm, the Board promised to take the empowerment of young people to new heights, including by working to lower the current age limit set in the definition of a young parliamentarian. He wished all the best to his successor and looked to all parliamentarians to continue supporting the IPU youth movement.

The President said that young parliamentarians made a vital contribution to the work of the IPU and that mutual cooperation would continue.

(d) Committee on Middle East Questions
(CL/207/11(d)-R.1)

Ms. S. Ataullahjan (Canada), outgoing President of the Committee on Middle East Questions, presenting the report of the Committee on Middle East Questions on its recent two days of meetings, as contained in document CL/207/11(d)-R.1, said that the Committee had extensively discussed the situation in Yemen and expressed concern over the appalling humanitarian situation, which was especially dire for women and children, and in particular the high levels of food insecurity. It had emphasized that the IPU must give priority to promoting access to humanitarian assistance in Yemen, expressed its support for a political solution to the conflict under United Nations auspices and strongly condemned the continued sale of weapons to the parties in conflict. It had also recommended that the IPU governing bodies should consider recognizing the House of Representatives in Seiyun but had also emphasized the need for inclusiveness and continued dialogue among all parliamentarians elected in 2003. It requested the Governing Council to endorse its statement on the situation in Yemen, which could be found in annex II of document CL/207/11(d)-R.1, for publication on the IPU website.

The Committee had welcomed the recent political agreements reached in Libya, encouraging their implementation and the conduct of elections in December 2021. It had strongly condemned foreign interference in the conflict, urged all stakeholders to work together for a common understanding on a way forward, and encouraged the House of Representatives in Tobruk to continue engaging with the IPU.

The Committee had also welcomed the peace and normalization agreements signed between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, the Sudan, and Morocco since September 2020. It had noted, however, that all peace should be inclusive and that the fate of Palestine must not be ignored. It had therefore encouraged the concerned parties to work towards comprehensive and sustainable peace and welcomed the desire expressed by its members for peace in the region.

In its wide-ranging discussions on the situation in Palestine, the Committee had welcomed the elections scheduled for May 2021 and, at its behest, the Secretary General had written to all Member Parliaments to encourage them to observe those elections in their individual capacities. The elections, however, had been postponed. The Committee had stressed the importance of the elections for the legitimate representation of the people of Palestine and expressed the hope that they could take place under free and fair conditions.

The Committee had also expressed deep concern over the alarming escalation of violence and tensions in East Jerusalem, which had continued until a ceasefire agreement had come into force. It had stressed the need for restraint and dialogue, with its Palestinian and Israeli members each objecting to the violence. On 12 May 2021, it had published a statement on those events in Jerusalem, which could be found in annex II of document CL/207/11(c)-R.1.

The President, thanking Ms. Ataullahjan for her contribution to the Committee's complex work, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse the Committee's statement on the situation in Yemen, as contained in annex I of document CL/207/11(d)-R.1.

It was so decided.

(e) Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law
(CL/207/11(e)-R.1)

Ms. Á. Vadai (Hungary), President of the Committee to Promote Respect for International Humanitarian Law, presenting her Committee's report contained in document CL/207/11(e)-R.1, said that, during its fruitful and constructive one-day meeting held in April 2021, the Committee had discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees, stateless persons and those fleeing conflict. The updates provided to it at that time had yet again confirmed the vulnerability and dire circumstances of those groups, who lived a precarious existence in crowded camps offering few facilities. During 2020, hunger, forced marriages, school dropouts and stigmatization had all risen among refugee communities whereas resettlements had decreased. Access to testing and vaccination remained a priority in 2021. For their part, parliamentarians must ensure that necessary treatment and support was available to those groups.

The situation was equally challenging for stateless persons, who might lack access to health facilities or be reluctant to seek them out from fear of detention or deportation. Again, vigilant policy making was required to ensure access for all to services without reprisal. In the interest of preventing further statelessness, the Committee hoped that the IPU would work to ensure that birth registration was retained as an essential service and that parliaments would take action to that end in their home countries.

The Committee had discussed the continuing efforts, including in the context of the #IBelong campaign, to end statelessness by 2024, which was achievable if, in addition to supporting access to birth registration, States ratified the relevant international instruments and removed gender-based discrimination from their nationality laws. To mark the 60th anniversary of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, the Committee had also approved a statement on parliamentary action in support of ending statelessness, which was annexed to its report and which it invited the Governing Council to endorse for onward transmission to the United Nations.

Lastly, the Committee had agreed to map out follow-up action to be taken by parliaments in respect of pledges made by their governments to the Global Refugee Forum, and to work on parliamentary activities to promote the implementation of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and, in view of their upcoming 45th anniversary in 2022, of the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. In the latter case, it would seek to develop an awareness campaign in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other stakeholders.

In conclusion, she thanked the Committee members for having entrusted her with the presidency of the Committee for a further year and said that she looked forward to continuing to work with them to enhance the implementation of international humanitarian law. Parliamentarians had a duty not to forget people fleeing their homes, living in conflict situations or without nationality, including by defending their rights.

The President, congratulating Ms. Vadai on her re-election, said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse the statement on parliamentary action in support of ending statelessness, which was annexed to document CL/207/11(e)-R.1.

It was so decided.

(f) Advisory Group on Health
(CL/207/11(f)-R.1)

Mr. J. Echániz (Spain), Vice-President of the Advisory Group on Health, delivered the report contained in document CL/207/11(f)-R.1 on the recent one-day meeting held by the Advisory Group on Health in April 2021.

The President said he took it that the Governing Council wished to endorse the statement issued by the Group on the occasion of the 2021 United Nations High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, as contained in the annex to document CL/207/11(f)-R.1.

It was so decided.

(g) High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism
(CL/207/11(g)-R.1)

Mr. R. Lopatka (Austria), President of the High-Level Advisory Group on Countering Terrorism and Violent Extremism (HLAG), presenting the Group's report set out in document CL/207/11(g)-R.1, said that the HLAG had held three meetings – in January 2020, June 2020 and May 2021 – and that he personally had participated in 29 meetings, most of them virtual. He had also visited Syrian camps for former foreign terrorist fighters and for women and children, as well as Hasakah Central Prison where such fighters were incarcerated. Although the IPU-United Nations Joint Programme on countering terrorism and violent extremism (CT/VE) was set to end in June 2021, cooperation would continue on the basis of the memorandum of understanding signed between the IPU, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT).

The Secretariat was developing IPU tools and products, such as the Global Parliamentary Network, an interactive map and a mobile application for parliamentarians. The HLAG had furthermore identified important regional cooperation partners, such as the G5 Sahel countries, where rising terrorism called for greater focus on the area. Working with experts, it had also drafted model legislative provisions on CT/VE that were due to be launched in 2021.

Jointly organized by the IPU, UNODC and UNOCT, the First Global Parliamentary Summit on Counter-Terrorism was scheduled to take place as an in-person event in Vienna, immediately after the Fifth World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in September 2021. Despite all difficulties, the HLAG was progressing in the right direction and hoped to attract new sources of additional funding in support of its activities.

The President, noting that no country was immune to terrorism, urged as many Members as possible to participate in the Global Parliamentary Summit on Counter-Terrorism.

The Governing Council took note of the reports on the activities of Committees and other bodies.

Item 12 of the agenda

REVISION OF THE IPU STRATEGY

The President, recalling that a new version of the IPU Strategy was to be prepared and submitted for approval at the next Assembly in late 2021, said that the contribution of Members to the process was vital and urged them to provide input by responding to the survey on the subject.

The Secretary General agreed that the inclusiveness of that process was key to producing a revised Strategy that continued to reflect the expectations and visions of IPU Members in the road map for the IPU's objectives and activities. Due to expire in December 2021, the existing Strategy would be revised following the assessment phase currently nearing its conclusion. In addition to consultations with a range of stakeholders, that phase included the survey sent to all Members. Some 650 responses had been received to date – with more still always welcome – and would be taken into account in the recommendations to be submitted, in July 2021, for consideration by the Executive Committee, including with an eye to the budget for 2022. A draft Strategy would then be prepared, on the basis of the Committee's response, for the consideration of and possible adoption by the Assembly with a view to its implementation as from 1 January 2022. All Members were encouraged to contribute actively to the assessment to ensure that the revised Strategy captured the priorities that they themselves had identified.

The President, thanking the Secretary General and his colleagues for their crucial support to the process described, said that the IPU Strategy was intended to strengthen the IPU, which therefore counted on Members to respond to the survey in the interest of identifying the best way forward for the IPU over the coming five years.

Item 13 of the agenda

OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. C. Roth (Germany), speaking with reference to a statement made during the previous day's sitting by the Chair of the Twelve Plus Group, said that the Chair had been subjected to a verbal attack in response by the IPU Vice-President Mr. Chen Guomin. In addition to its unacceptably aggressive tone, that attack consisted of baseless allegations. The IPU was the forum par excellence for discussing the human rights of parliamentarians as a matter of priority and the unfortunate truth was that parliamentarians from Belgium, Canada, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, together with a member of the European Parliament, were being subjected to Chinese-imposed sanctions simply for having raised legitimate human rights concerns, in the line of parliamentary duty, about alleged abuses against Uyghurs in Xinjiang and about restrictions imposed on

democracy in Hong Kong. It was intolerable and contrary the IPU's core values for any parliamentarian to be at risk of sanctions for speaking out, in an IPU setting, on human rights matters. No lessons in democracy were needed from the delegate concerned.

Ms. H. Baldwin (United Kingdom), expressing thanks for the range of magnificent reports that had brought home the importance of the IPU's work in bringing together all parliamentarians, said that her country strongly supported the sacrosanct founding principle that parliaments were safe spaces in which parliamentarians could raise points and express opinions, including those that would attract opposing views and be hotly debated. Parliamentarians should not be sanctioned simply for raising points in their national parliaments. She hoped that the President would reinforce that important principle in his closing remarks.

Mr. J.M. Kabund-a-Kabund (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that, in his country, a volcanic earthquake had occurred a few days previously around the city of Goma, killing scores of people and causing immense damage. The authorities had acted to ensure the safety of the population and were closely monitoring the situation. He appealed to IPU Members for support in helping his country to deal with the aftermath of the event.

Mr. Chen Guomin (China), noting that the statement made at the previous day's sitting by the Chair of the Twelve Plus Group had been out of order and inconsistent with democratic procedure, said that he rejected the follow-up remarks made by the preceding speakers under the present item as equally unacceptable and factually distorted. Based on lies and disinformation, the decision of the European Union to impose unilateral sanctions on his country, in brazen violation of international law and the basic norms for international relations, constituted a gross interference in the internal affairs of China, which had legitimately reacted with countermeasures to safeguard its sovereignty and interests.

To justify sanctions by placing blame on China ran counter to the traditions and values of the IPU, which worked on the basis of facts to find common ground and shared solutions to problems. Sincere about advancing its bilateral relations, China hoped that the European Union would reflect on its decision and seek instead to resolve differences through dialogue and communication, relying more on rational thinking than on emotional fanfare. No country was superior to others and gone were the days when China was bullied by Western powers. The China of today worked for a common future of peace, security, development and the well-being of all and rejected any dialogue premised on an unequal footing or on malicious lies, groundless facts and disinformation.

The President, after expressing solidarity with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its people in the wake of the recent natural disaster around Goma, said that, as President of the IPU, he would never impose censorship on parliamentary colleagues, who had freedom of speech and could agree to disagree, provided that they did so in a civilized and inoffensive manner. The willingness to take on board different views lay at the heart of parliamentary democracy, meaning that sanctions against parliamentarians could never be condoned or accepted under any circumstances. On the basis of that fundamental principle, the Chair of the Twelve Plus Group had made an important statement about such sanctions in the interest of opening a dialogue and sharing perspectives on the subject. In-person meetings, however, undoubtedly offered better and wider opportunities for debates of that nature.

Declaring the sitting closed, he wished all Members well and looked forward to working with them again in future – and especially so in a post-pandemic world.

The sitting rose at 17:50 CEST.